Situated practices in global projects

Interactionally managing uncertainty and ambiguity

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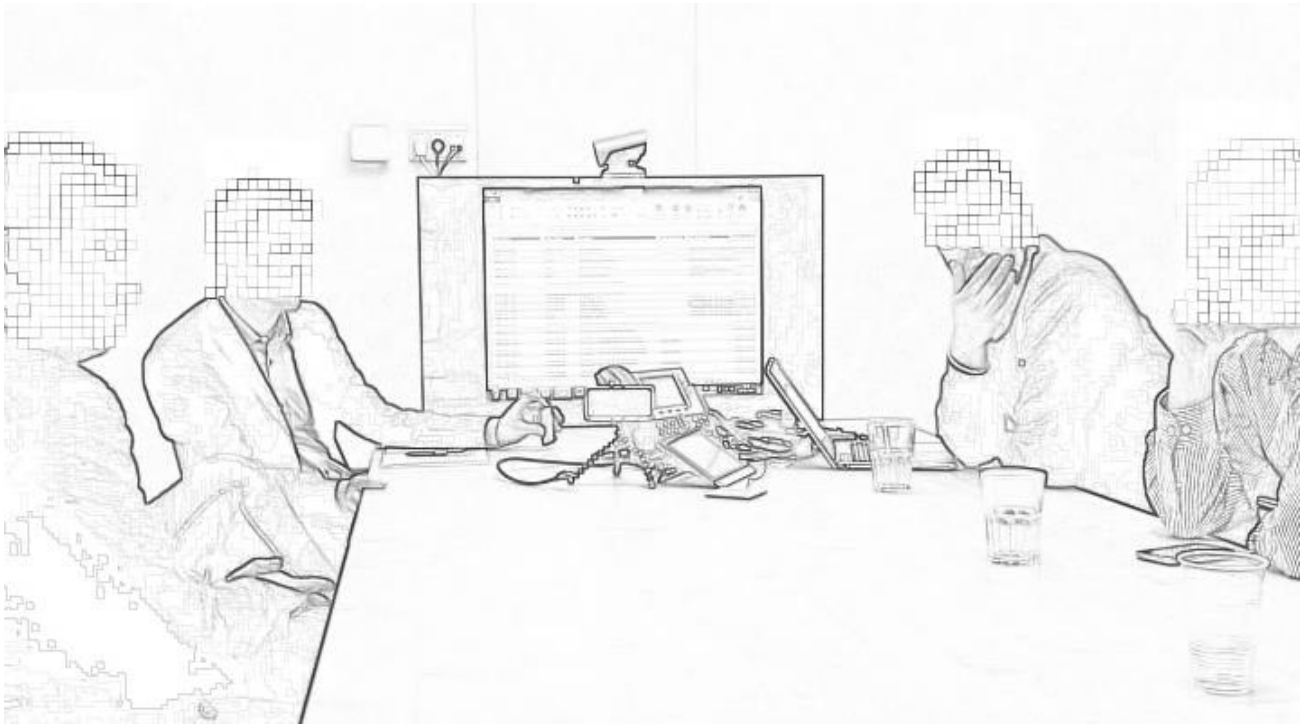

PhD Thesis

Liv Otto Hassert

SITUATED PRACTICES IN GLOBAL PROJECTS

Interactionally managing uncertainty and ambiguity

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Submitted on: 2 October 2018

Liv Otto Hassert

Situated Practices in Global Projects: Interactionally managing uncertainty and ambiguity

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Summary

Projects are complex work contexts. Members of project teams must collaborate to perform planned tasks that require close coordination and clear communication. This collaboration can be demanding in itself, but is made more challenging because it often needs to be accomplished through virtual media, as team members can be distributed across the world. At the same time, the project members must continuously adapt to constant changes in the organizational environment and consider internal stakeholders' demands and interests. In addition, they are required to collaborate with both external vendors and customers, who may also be distributed worldwide. This dissertation explores the practices of projects by examining how project members through situated interactions create meaning in their complex work context and how they handle different types of uncertainties and ambiguities in practice.

This dissertation draws on three different types of empirical material: Interviews with project managers, observations of project managers and teams, as well as recordings of the same teams' meetings. The empirical material was collected within Maersk Line IT, who is the industrial partner of this PhD study.

The dissertation applies an ethnomethodological framework and is centred on three analyses that illustrate how project actors handle different types of uncertainties and ambiguities. Through micro-analysis of meeting interaction, in particular, the analytical chapters show how project teams create order in their daily, complex work context, how project members handle different types of unexpected problems in their work and the uncertainties created by these problems, as well as how project actors handle relational ambiguity in complex project contexts.

By studying the situated practices in projects, this study contributes with a deeper understanding of how project practices as such are performed in practice. It is concluded that the project actors produce different types of management mechanisms such as routines and situated identifications to manage uncertainties and ambiguities. Across the analyses, membership knowledge and competencies are shown to be central for being able to produce these management mechanisms and thus essential for managing and making sense of the complex work setting. Theoretically, the dissertation contributes to project research, especially to the project-as-practice field, by showing the situated, interactional practices that the project actors perform, how meaning and order are created through these practices, and how the practices are performed as 'ordinary' in the overall project practice.

Resumé

Projekter er komplekse arbejdskontekster. Medlemmer af projektteams må samarbejde om at udføre planlagte arbejdsopgaver, som kræver tæt koordinering og tydelig kommunikation. Dette samarbejde kan være krævende i sig selv, men gøres mere udfordrende af, at det ofte foregår gennem virtuelle medier, da teammedlemmer kan være distribuerede på tværs af verden. Samtidigt skal projektmedlemmerne kontinuerligt tilpasse sig løbende forandringer i de organisatoriske omgivelser samt forholde sig interne interessenters krav. Dertil kræves det, at de skal indgå i tæt samarbejde med både eksterne leverandører og kunder, som ligeledes kan være distribueret verden over. Denne afhandling går tæt på praksis og undersøger hvordan projektmedlemmer situationelt i deres interaktionen skaber mening i deres komplekse arbejdskontekst, og hvordan de håndterer forskellige former for usikkerheder og ambiguiteter i praksis.

Afhandlingens analyser trækker på tre forskellige former for empirisk materiale: Interviews med projektledere, observationer af projektledere og -teams, samt optagelser af de samme teams' møder. Det empiriske materiale er indsamlet i Maersk Line IT, som udgør den industrielle partner i dette ph.d.-projekt. Afhandlingen anlægger et etnometodologisk perspektiv og er centreret om tre analyser, der fra forskellige vinkler søger at besvare, hvordan projektaktører håndterer usikkerheder og ambiguiteter. Gennem særligt mikroanalyser af mødeinteraktion, afdækker analysekapitlerne, hvordan projektteams skaber orden i deres daglige, komplekse arbejdskontekst, hvordan projektmedlemmer håndterer forskellige former for uventede problemer i deres arbejde og de usikkerheder disse problemer skaber, samt hvordan projektaktører forholder sig til og håndterer relationel ambiguitet i komplekse projektkontekster.

Ved at studere de situerede praksisser i projekter bidrager dette studie til en forbedret forståelse af, hvordan projektpraksis reelt udføres. Det konkluderes, at projektaktørerne producerer forskellige former for håndteringsmekanismer såsom rutiner og identifikationer for at kunne håndtere usikkerheder og ambiguitet. På tværs af analyserne illustreres det, hvordan medlemskompetencer og -viden er nødvendige for at kunne producere disse håndteringsmekanismer og dermed er essentielle for kunne håndtere og skabe mening i det komplekse. Teoretisk bidrager afhandlingen til projekt-forskningsfeltet, og særligt til praksisorienterede grene af dette forskningsfelt, ved at vise de situerede, interaktionelle praksisser som projektaktørerne udfører, hvordan mening og orden skabes gennem disse, samt hvordan de situerede praksisser udføres som en 'normal' del af den overordnede projektpraksis.

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Liv Otto Hassert
Copenhagen, October 2018

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1 Introduction

Today's organizations are embracing the possibilities of globalization and rapid technological development. The globalization of the workforce and the continuous development of virtual communication resources enable organizations to execute global projects by sourcing talent from anywhere in the world and facilitate that organizations can outsource work to external vendors, as the technological advancements support close collaboration on complex work tasks. However, despite the benefits for organizations and the possibilities that these types of projects may have, this way of working has practical implications.

On the one hand, global projects are standardized in the sense that there are project goals, specific (often tight) timeframes, project plans, and 'project professionals' who are working full-time on one or more projects and who are moving from one project to the next as the project aims are accomplished. On the other hand, projects are complex work settings where actors continuously deal with changes and differentiated requirements and must collaborate with a range of stakeholders. In global organizations, project members are often distributed across continents, countries, or cities, and they rarely meet face-to-face but must instead find ways to communicate, collaborate, and develop a sense of team across time and space. These teams must work across organizational boundaries to collaborate with external vendors while at the same time managing subjective stakeholder demands and constantly adapting to organizational changes and requirements. The distributed, virtual way of working, the interdependence between organizational projects, the unpredictable organizational settings, the changeable customer requirements, and the cross-organizational collaborations create challenging working conditions and can create uncertainty and ambiguity for the actors working on projects.

This dissertation is a study of the situated practices of managing different kinds of uncertainties and ambiguities in global projects. In particular, the study is interested in how project actors understand and create meaning in their complex work setting, how they manage the uncertainty created by a changeable and unpredictable work setting, and how they handle the relational ambiguity of cross-organizational collaborations.

1.1 Projects as the context of study

In organizations, projects are used to execute critical, high-priority tasks that often require both innovative and routinized work activities, involve a large number of stakeholders, must be executed within a determined time frame and budget, and necessitate actors with a range of professional skills. For years, projects have been the subject of research, which has in particular examined the *management* of projects within

organizational contexts and how to organize projects so that teams are equipped to control these different aspects. What has been left underexplored is what project actors actually do in *practice* (Blomquist, Hällgren, Nilsson, & Söderholm, 2010), the situated practices of accomplishing work in projects, and how local contingencies influence the project work and actors.

The field of project studies has only somewhat recently begun to address projects as social organizations and consider project actors' practices or experiences with working on a project. Recent project research has turned to explore "what goes on" in what we label as 'projects', that is, 'the actual doings – what is done, what is said, what is used – of actors' in projects (Sergi, 2012, p. 345). In particular, practice-oriented projects have begun 'to look into the social dynamics in the context of projects, and to take into consideration its situatedness' (Sergi, 2012, p. 345).

Taking the notion of situatedness seriously, this study explores how project actors in situated interactions manage to produce meaningful collaboration and work within the complex context. The study attends to aspects of the work settings that project actors *themselves* orient to as (more or less) uncertain or ambiguous and explores how the actors in interactions collectively make sense of and manage these uncertain and ambiguous aspects. By focusing in on the details of projects, in particular attending to project meeting interactions, we get access to how the project actors in situ make sense of their work, the project setting, and their relations, and how they are able to make complex situations manageable. Exploring projects by examining situated practices will enable us to better understand projects *in* practice and *as* practice and thus how more general project (management) practices are actually accomplished.

1.2 The Research Project

This study is an industrial PhD project that was initiated in 2014 and has been funded by Maersk Line IT (today, Maersk T&L IT), the Innovation Fund Denmark, and the University of Copenhagen. The topic of the study was decided upon in collaboration between me as the PhD candidate, my supervisor Mie Femø Nielsen, and Peter Skyttegaard, my supervisor at the time in Maersk Line IT.

Maersk Line IT is a project organization that delivers information technologies (IT) to Maersk Line, the global shipping company founded in Denmark. At the time of the application for the PhD project, the MLIT organization was introducing a large change initiative that focused on the standardizing of project management within the organization and improving the global collaboration between projects and internally in distributed projects. This PhD study was framed with a focus on the 'softer' aspects of global projects and with the intention of exploring the challenges of the project actors' work lives. Although both the organization as well as the focus of this study have been altered somewhat over the last few years, the central focus on project actors and how they manage different challenges in complex, global project contexts remains.

1.3 Research Methodology

This study draws on ethnomethodology, a research methodology founded by Garfinkel (1967) that is concerned with how 'ordinary members of society make sense of, find their way about in, and act on the circumstances in which they find themselves' (Heritage, 1984, p. 4). Ethnomethodology directs our attention to the practices with which actors (members) in interaction produce mutual understandings and accomplish accountable actions; that is, ethnomethodology focuses 'on the practical accomplishment of social actions and its interest in how participants in talk make sense of and create order in their social worlds' (Richards, 2011, p. 202). This perspective has been and is central to the research questions and analyses of this study.

In the following, I will outline the methodology in order to make the overall framework for the study clear.

Ethnomethodology was developed by Garfinkel in the 1950s and presented, and in some ways still does, a radical new way of thinking about and addressing empirical research (Lynch, 1999). Ethnomethodology is seemingly neither method nor theory (Rawls, 2008) but is rather the 'study' of situated methods (practices) of reasoning and how actors collectively make sense of the world and produce social order (Rawls, 2008), that is, construct the 'world' in ways that are meaningful for the members. Heritage (1984, p. 4) notes that ethnomethodology was designed as 'a label to capture a range of phenomena associated with the use of mundane knowledge and reasoning procedures by ordinary members of society'. It is an approach that requires a focus on qualitative, empirical material and an attendance to actors' actions and processes of achieving meaning-making. Contrary to other research paradigms within sociology, in which the methodology was originally positioned, the methodology centralizes members' own perspectives by focusing on *how actors* (or members) construct social order by attending to situated practice: 'What is at stake is not the theoretical problem of order, but the substantive production of order on singular occasions' (Lynch, 2001). Thus, what organizational scholars often 'take as pre-given external social "facts" and "forces", ethnomethodology takes as things that people have to produce in an ongoing and never-ending process' (Whittle & Housley, 2017, p. 174). Ethnomethodology was in that way developed in opposition to conventional research's detachment from empirical contexts and use of grand theories (Heritage, 1984).

Garfinkel was a student of Parsons, and despite explicit inspiration from his research on social actions and structure, Garfinkel's work opposed many of Parson's theories (Heritage, 1984). Rather than looking at action systems, Garfinkel placed emphasis on the actors' orientations and 'the local, moment-by-moment determination of meaning in social contexts' (Heritage, 1984, p. 2). One of the few sociologists of the time that Garfinkel was inspired by was Schutz and his phenomenological work (Schutz, 1972, 1976), in particular his thoughts on rationality and the taken-for-granted aspects of everyday life (Garfinkel, 1967).

In his work, Garfinkel demonstrated that much of what we do and how we interact is *taken for granted* by ourselves and others (Garfinkel, 1967) and revealed the 'taken-for-granted nature of commonsense reasoning' (Whittle & Housley, 2017, p. 178), that is, the 'seen-but-unnoticed background features' (Watson, 1992, p. 177) of everyday life. In an ethnomethodological context, the term *common sense* (Garfinkel, 1967) does not suggest that certain knowledge is universally common sense but rather that certain knowledge is common sense *for the members*; due to membership of specific categories, we have experiences, knowledge, as well as taken-for-granted knowledge that can be relied on to reason about and produce meaning of situations – this knowledge is at the same time, by being used in that way, produced as common-sense knowledge for that category. It is only through social interaction that people's common-sense knowledge and how it is used as a resource in sensemaking is made available – both to others in the in situ interaction as well as to us as observers.

Common sense knowledge and practical reasoning (in which this knowledge is used) are important elements in the production of *intersubjectivity* and in the production of meaningful, recognizable actions. Intersubjectivity is situationally 'shared' meaning; not 'shared' as in cognitively 'the same' but rather shared as in actors together produce intersubjectivity (shared sense) of what is taking place/they are doing or talking about. Consequently, intersubjectivity is contextually dependent and situationally accomplished. It follows that this type of sensemaking process is not accessible through anything but observations of real-life interactions. Garfinkel argued, as Heritage and Clayman (2010, p. 9) notes, that 'coordinated and meaningful actions, regardless of whether they involve cooperation or conflict, are impossible without these shared understandings'. That is, we as actors are able to *produce* actions that are *recognizable* to ourselves and others as those actions – making it possible for others to make sense of those actions in situ and produce sensible, accountable actions in response, constructing mutually intelligible interaction.

The concept of sensemaking is commonly used within organizational studies, which often draws on the concept of sensemaking as presented by Weick (1995), who conceptualized sensemaking as 'an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occur' (Weick, 1993, p. 635). For Weick and scholars following his tradition, the interest is in both the individual cognitive and the social processes of sensemaking (Telenius, 2016). Here, sensemaking is not understood as happening 'between' individuals but rather as happening 'inside' individuals and then expressed and shared through talk and actions. Although the communicative aspect is central, the 'Weickian' approach to sensemaking scarcely 'devote[s] analytical attention to interaction as a local act of sensemaking' (Telenius, 2016, p. 28), which ethnomethodology in contrast places focus on, as sensemaking (intersubjectivity) here is fundamentally understood as a socially produced phenomenon. Within ethnomethodology, actions are taken as expressions of meaning and as being observable and reportable for both members and observers (Garfinkel, 1967). It is these public expressions of sense that members can 'analyse' and thereby produce sensible next actions and construct mutual intelligibility.

Garfinkel (1967, p. 11) states that ethnomethodology refers to 'the investigation of the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments of organized artful practices of everyday life'. In this, it is understood 'that any social action only "makes sense" through inferences about what the action "indexes" or "points to" in that particular context' (Whittle & Housley, 2017, p. 175). This implies that it can be problematic for the interaction and meaning-making if actors understand actions as indexing or 'pointing to' different matters. As Whittle and Housley (2017, p. 175) note: 'Trouble and disorganization soon emerge when people use different "patterns"'. In these situations, the production of sense can momentarily collapse and then people need to *account* for their actions, for example, by repairing their talk (Schegloff, 1992). Accountability thus involves the production of sensible, recognizable actions as well as repair if these actions are not recognized.

Ethnomethodology has not been widely adopted in organizational research, although a number of studies rely on ethnomethodologically informed analytical methods (Aggerholm & Asmuß, 2016; J. Clifton, 2014; Jonathan Clifton, 2015; Dameron, Lê, & LeBaron, 2015; Holmes, Schnurr, & Marra, 2007; Larsson & Lundholm, 2010, 2013; Llewellyn & Spence, 2009; M. F. Nielsen, 2009; Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Suchman, 2006; Whittle, Housley, Gilchrist, Mueller, & Lenney, 2014). However, in project studies there are seemingly no prior studies that draw on ethnomethodology.

The minimal adoption amongst organizational studies is not as such surprising, since ethnomethodology opposes conventional theory-driven research approaches and rejects research driven by the analyst's a priori assumptions, instead centralizing the empirical materials and focusing on what 'goes on' in the situational context. This alternative approach has led some to critique ethnomethodology for lacking theoretical orientation (Rawls, 2008), whereas ethnomethodology in opposition problematizes conventional research's tendency to generalize and treat 'order as an aggregate result of individual action in a context of either structurally constrained or goal-oriented activity' rather than focus on how 'contingent details exhibit order in individual cases and in their own right' (Rawls, 2008, p. 703).

Thus, ethnomethodology places emphasis on empirical material, situated interactions, and members' orientations, rather than a predefined analytical focus. Ethnomethodology's strength is that it enables us to rethink assumptions made in social science: 'The notion that we act in response to an objectively given social world is replaced by the assumption that our everyday social practices render the world publicly available and mutually intelligible' (Suchman, 2006, p. 76). Or as Lynch (1999, p. 227) phrases it, ethnomethodology does not see the world as 'a barren landscape of forms and mechanisms, but a life-world inhabited by competent masters'.

In sum, within this study, ethnomethodology is used as a research methodology that implies specific ontological and epistemological standpoints, where a social constructivist perspective is applied and the world is 'accessed' through the members' orientations, sayings, and doings. In this study, the

ethnomethodological approach will influence both the research questions raised and the choice of analytical methods used to find answers to these questions.

To distinguish between the ethnomethodological notion of *members* and the formal position as *project team members*, I will use the term *project actors* to refer to all actors working on the project, regardless of organizational affiliation, and use the term *project team member* when referring to persons who are formally members of the IT project team. Also, I use the term *project member* to refer to actors who categorize as members of the project, although they might not formally be members of the project team.

Ethnomethodology is not an analytical method in itself, but in using the associated analytical methods of conversation analysis and membership categorization analysis it becomes possible to explore and show how social order is accomplished by attending to the actors' situational interaction. The combination of ethnomethodology, conversation analysis and membership categorization analysis is referred to as an EMCA approach (Stokoe, 2012). This approach and the analytical methods will be explained in more detail in Chapter 4.

1.4 The Research Questions

The empirical setting, the theoretical field, and the ethnomethodological approach of this study have in different ways influenced the focus of this study and the development of the central research question as well as the more specified sub-questions. The theoretical framework, which will be outlined in the following chapter, considers projects to be complex settings in which different types of uncertainty and ambiguity must be dealt with. Recent project literature calls for further studies of project practices, which in an ethnomethodological perspective becomes an interest in *how* social actors, such as project team members, situationally produce meaning and accomplish activities and practices. Based on this, the central research question is as follows:

In global and complex projects, how do project actors manage uncertainty and ambiguity?

In order to explore and answer this question, three groups of more detailed questions have been developed. These enable the exploration of different aspects of uncertainty and ambiguity within the project settings. The more detailed questions are:

In complex projects,

1. how do project actors produce order?
2. how do project actors situationally produce their setting and work as ordinary?

3. how do project actors handle instances of unexpectedness?
4. how do project actors situationally achieve sensemaking and organization of action in unexpected situations?

5. how do project actors make sense of relations?
6. how do project actors situationally produce identifications as members of the projects or the organizations?

How the specific foci of these research questions emerged is explained in section 5.4. By answering the research questions above, this study demonstrates how actors make sense of the complex project settings, specific challenging situations, and ambiguous relations and explains how actors are able to produce relevant actions and thus actually progress with the work.

1.5 Contribution of the Study

This study's most central contributions are to projects studies, in particular the *projects-as-practice* field. By exploring fundamentally ethnomethodological questions of how project actors produce situated sensemaking and accomplish mundane activities, this study contributes the existing project theory on practice in that it demonstrates the *situated* practices of making sense of and managing uncertainty and ambiguity in complex, global projects. The study further illustrates the *resources* with which project actors in situ make sense of the context and uncertain or ambiguous challenges and achieve organization of actions.

The study draws on interviews, observations, and recordings of meetings to explore both perceptions and practices of project actors, pointing to differences and connections. Through analysis of the micro level of interactions in project meetings, particularly exploring how categorical and sequential order is accomplished, this study makes it clear that it requires continuous effort by project actors to produce order and make work manageable in the complex settings. The study demonstrates that membership knowledge and competences are central resources for making sense of and managing uncertainties in terms of work activities and ambiguity in terms of work relationships. Further, drawing on the concepts of routines and identification, the study explains the mechanisms of the situated management of uncertain and ambiguous aspects.

Studies within project research are increasingly attending to project practices; however, the methodological approach of this study is novel within the field, and the findings complement and expand on previous studies by deepening our understanding of situated project practices. Trough an ethnomethodological framework, the study approaches sensemaking, organization of actions, and project practices (situated and in general) as collective accomplishments. As for practical contributions, the findings

of this study have implications for project managers (and subsequently for actors working on projects) and project-based organizations, since the findings suggest several areas of development as well as points to be aware in current and future project practice and governance, especially arguing for the need for flexible and relationally oriented project practices in the future.

1.6 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into 9 chapters. After this first introductory chapter follows the second chapter, which introduces literature on projects, providing a general introduction to the research field as well as studies on project complexities and unexpectedness and studies on global, virtual teams – areas of particular relevance for this study. Chapter 3 introduces the theoretical concepts of *routines* and *identification*. Chapter 4 introduces the analytical methods of conversation analysis and membership categorization analysis. Chapter 5 describes and presents reflections on the research design and data collection process. In chapters 6 to 8, the three analyses are unfolded. Chapter 6 considers the first two detailed research questions, exploring how order is achieved in the complex work setting and how the work comes to be treated as ordinary. Chapter 7 explores the third and fourth sub-research questions, examining how situations of unexpectedness are handled in situ and the practices of producing sensemaking and response actions. Chapter 8 examines the fifth and sixth detailed research questions, in particular focusing on relations and identification processes within complex projects. Chapter 9 presents first the main findings from the analytical chapters and then the conclusions to the central research question. Hereafter, the chapter discusses the analytical findings in relation to the existing theory, reflects on the methodological approach, and considers implications for practice and future research.

2 Literature Review

In the following chapter, I will first outline the most central streams of research within the project field. This first section will both function as an introduction to projects as such but also to the theoretical field. Following this more general introduction, two more specific areas of project research of particular relevance for this study will be outlined and areas relevant for future research will be identified.

2.1 Projects and Project Management: An Introduction

In organizations worldwide, projects have become one of the most common ways to organize and accomplish work. We live in a "projectified" world where many central business 'activities take place through project-based processes' (Geraldi, Maylor, & Williams, 2011, p. 966). In line with the emergence of projects in practice, a research field with a specific interest in projects has developed over the years.

In the following, this project research field will be outlined. First, projects and project management will be defined, and, subsequently, dominating streams of research will be reviewed.

2.1.1 Defining projects and project management

Projects are defined as specific, complex bundles of work with a specific goal that needs to be achieved within a limited time and budget and live up to a certain quality (Cicmil, Hodgson, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2009; Söderlund, 2004a). They are constituted by series of simultaneous and/or sequential activities with clear goals that need to be delivered by a dedicated team of people. Project management is the practice of organizing, driving, and ensuring the projects are completed within time and budget. Or as described by Pich, Loch, and Meyer (2002, p. 1011): 'project management consists of planning, executing, and monitoring'.

Project management is a field that has emerged from practice and has, over the years, become professionalized. Different studies name different large-scale engineering, construction, and technical projects in their descriptions of the profession's origins, for example, the Hoover dam construction in the 1930s (Cicmil et al., 2009). Today, in industries such as IT, construction, etc., project-based structures are the dominant way of organizing work, and projects can differ from being small endeavours to being massive project programmes made up of an interrelated network of numerous projects.

Some organizations are *project-based organizations* (Söderlund & Tell, 2011), which means that the primary work of the organization is performed in projects, while non-project actors are occupied with

governance functions, administration, etc. Söderlund and Tell (2011, p. 237) note that 'project-based organizational forms [are used] to build competitive advantage' and that 'the value of projects as an organizational form consists largely in its capacity to integrate differentiated and distributed knowledge and skills'. Thus, projects enable organizations to meet the increasing requirements for developing innovative products, the development of systems or solutions for time sensitive challenges, as well as for tackling complex organizational problems. Due to the nature of these project tasks, project work often requires specialized professional skills in order to deliver the projects, and, thus, project teams often consist of skilled individuals from different countries, and the team members may be distributed across several locations.

Although somewhat varied in practice, projects are recognizable as an organizational structure, and as noted by Geraldi et al. (2011, p. 966), the projectification of organizations 'gives legitimacy, structure and, for most organizations, a recognizable business process for anything termed "a project"'.

2.1.2 Research on projects

Some argue that the field of project research, due to its origins in engineering, has remained somewhat detached from organizational research. However, in recent years the field of research has become more nuanced in terms of types of inquiries, phenomena in focus, and theoretical breadth. The empirical setting and theoretical field were, in a way, 'discovered' by management scholars and have since attracted increasing attention (Jacobsson, Lundin, & Söderholm, 2015), and, subsequently, an increasing number of studies on projects are being published in organizational journals (Geraldi & Söderlund, 2018). However, as Söderlund (2004a) suggests there is still few references being made between organizational and project research.

Several studies, such as Pollack and Adler (2015) and Padalkar and Gopinath (2016b), conclude that project journals (e.g. International Journal of Project Management [IJPM]) have developed from functionalistic types of research to more social science oriented of research that focus on explanatory studies of practice and social phenomena. Due to this increased diversification of the theoretical field, it has been suggested that the field should be called *project studies* rather than project *management* studies (Geraldi & Söderlund, 2018).[1] Geraldi and Söderlund define project studies as:

> an umbrella for the studies in, on and around projects. 'Project studies' is novel as it does not propose an alternative perspective on projects, but instead calls for an inclusive and integrative research field for all

[1] In a similar manner, Söderlund has previously suggested to rename the area of study 'project research' (Söderlund, 2004b, p. 656).

perspectives, fostering vibrant dialogue and debate that welcomes different opinions and perspectives. (2018, p. 56)

For this study, the term *project studies* is central, since the focus here is on social phenomena within a project setting rather than project management.

In the following, I will outline two of the most dominant strands of research within the project field: 1) the traditional stream of research and 2) social science studies attending to project practice and processes (Blomquist et al., 2010; Söderlund, 2002). This outline will also point to particular sub-streams within the two areas of research.

2.1.2.1 *Traditional project studies*

Traditional project studies have been the mainstream research approach within project studies. This stream of studies is aligned with the ontological, methodological, and theoretical origins of projects, specifically the field of engineering (Cicmil & Hodgson, 2006). Traditional studies are thus quantitative and have normative and instrumental aims (Cicmil & Hodgson, 2006; Smyth & Morris, 2007). The approach, by critics called the 'Critical Success Factor School' (Söderlund, 2002, p. 24), seeks to improve projects and the practice of project management by identifying factors (e.g. competences or methods) that positively influence efficiency and success rates (Belassi & Tukel, 1996; Joslin & Müller, 2016; Papke-Shields, Beise, & Quan, 2010; Serrador & Pinto, 2015).

The traditional stream of research has a great deal of focus on planning and controlling aspects (Packendorff, 1994) and on developing/evaluating methodologies, models, tools, and techniques (Papke-Shields et al., 2010) with the aim of enabling practitioners to better manage contingencies. Consequently, a number of studies focus on risk management and how the practice is performed and could be improved in project work (Besner & Hobbs, 2012; Kutsch & Hall, 2010; Reed & Knight, 2010; Thamhain, 2013). Although project studies, and in particular this strand of research, have not aligned with developments in organizational theory (as mentioned above), the field has in the past found inspiration in management theory classics such as Fayol (1949), whose primary management activities (planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling) closely resemble the field's normative descriptions of project management practices (Hodgson, 2004).

The traditional project research has a strong interest in leaders, competences, management efficiency and performance, and management activities (Belassi & Tukel, 1996; Cooke-Davies, 2002; Havärі, 2006; Joslin & Müller, 2016; Mir & Pinnington, 2014; Takey & Carvalho, 2015; Thamhain, 2004). In line with the professionalization of project management in practice (Stevenson & Starkweather, 2010), especially studies of competences have been on the rise. In line with the instrumental, normative aims, that underlie studies

within the research stream, scholars have prescribed standards for project management competency (Crawford, 2005) in order to equip organizations to recruit the 'right' project managers.

Building on this type of practitioner-relevant research, several so-called project management associations (e.g. Project Management Institute) have developed and published different 'bodies of knowledge' that 'provide a baseline for organizational practice and individual competence or knowledge assessment' (Geraldi et al., 2011, p. 967). The underlying notion is that all 'project management knowledge is applicable to all sorts of projects in all sorts of industries and environments' (Packendorff, 1995, p. 324).

However, a number of scholars have criticized these bodies of knowledge as well as normative studies in general for being too simplistic and detached from practice (Cicmil & Hodgson, 2006; Packendorff, 1994; Smyth & Morris, 2007). For instance, Packendorff (1995, p. 325) problematizes that 'academics often seem as eager as the practitioners to provide straight answers, elegant models and universal truths', consequently ignoring or reducing the complexity and nuances of the practitioners' challenges and daily practices. In line with this, Ramazani and Jergeas (2014, p. 42) note that: 'project management training and education fail in preparing project management students to deal with the increasing complexity that they face in today's working environment'. These types of arguments are seemingly built on the understanding that projects are not simple but are in fact, due to their nature, difficult to standardize (Cicmil et al., 2009), as they are 'characterized by tensions between unpredictability, control and collaborative interaction among diverse participants on any project' (Cicmil, Williams, Thomas, & Hodgson, 2006, p. 676).

Thus, it seems that in attempting to reveal causal relationships and success criteria for projects, the traditional stream of project research risks reducing the complexity of project realities rather than disclosing what actually takes place in practice.

2.1.2.2 *Practice and process studies*

Another dominant strand of project research is studies that examine projects-as-practice and processes. This strand is often referred to as the social science approach (Blomquist et al., 2010; Söderlund, 2004a); a name that suggests that it differentiates from the traditional studies and that it also could, and to some extent does, comprise a vast and varied number of studies.

The social science studies are oriented towards social phenomena and attempt to take the 'complexity of projects into account to replace simple life cycle models' (Jacobsson, Lundin, & Söderholm, 2016, p. 757). The studies centre on project practitioners – *the actors* – and explore their practices, experiences, or perceptions; however, as with organizational research in general, phenomena and research approaches vary greatly. For instance, in terms of phenomena, project studies have, in line with organizational research, been particularly interested in leadership and (similar to organizational studies) perspectives have varied

extensively (Giritli, Öney-Yazıcı, Topçu-Oraz, & Acar, 2013; Havermans, Keegan, & Den Hartog, 2015; Iorio & Taylor, 2015).

The emergence of these social science studies can be seen as a reaction to the traditional studies and a general turn in organizational studies towards discourse and practice (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Schatzki, Knorr, & von Savigny, 2001). For instance, Cicmil and Hodgson (2006, p. 111) have criticized the lack of focus on contextual contingencies and the underlying assumptions of the traditional studies 'about the possibility of the progressive rationalisation of action and a belief in the progressive and cumulative character of knowledge'.

The focus on practice and organi*zing* in projects emerged more than 20 years ago as researchers started to question the traditional studies within project management and advocated that the field should focus on the 'becoming', organiz*ing*, and unfolding of project practices in context and variations between projects through empirical studies (Sahlin-Andersson & Söderholm, 2002). In general, social science project scholars argue for a need to focus on the practices, experiences, and processes within projects – on *what* is happening and *how*.

Although the social science stream is referred to as one, sub-streams can be identified, such as the *projects-as-practice* approach and the *process perspective*. While these two streams are treated by some as completely differentiable (Blomquist et al., 2010), other studies draw on process ontology to investigate practices (Sergi, 2012). I will briefly outline the two sub-streams separately, but it is important to remember that there are close interrelations between the two.

2.1.2.2.1 Projects-as-practice

A distinct stream within the social sciences approach is the projects-as-practice approach (Blomquist et al., 2010; Hällgren & Söderholm, 2010; Söderholm, 2008). Projects-as-practice studies are generally concerned with in-depth questions of *how*, such as how actors perform specific/everyday work activities, how project practices unfold, how projects come 'into being', etc. The development of the strand within project studies can be seen as a problematization of the previous, traditional research's (lack of) attendance to practice, in that 'many of the normative and traditional contributions are also insubstantial when it comes to understanding what is really occurring in projects' (Blomquist et al., 2010, p. 6). In contrast to these traditional studies, 'a practice perspective means taking the actions of the practitioners seriously, and treating projects as something people do, rather than a structure that is' (Karrbom Gustavsson & Gohary, 2012, p. 365).

Within the organizational field, the concept of practice is not new, but it has been revitalized as the so-called 'practice turn' (Schatzki et al., 2001). Today, in organizational research, practice has in some ways taken the place of structure as the phenomena that studies are particularly interested in explaining (Schatzki et al., 2001), and practice-oriented approaches are used to study organizational phenomena such as strategy

(Samra-Fredericks, 2003, 2010). However, it is quite recent that the practice turn (Schatzki et al., 2001) has taken hold in the project field, and the understanding of projects as constituted by everyday practices has now begun appearing in more studies (Blomquist et al., 2010; Cicmil et al., 2006; Floricel, Bonneau, Aubry, & Sergi, 2014; Hällgren & Söderholm, 2010; Söderholm, 2008; Söderlund, 2004a, 2005). These studies explore the mundane activities going on in projects, the everyday practices. However, the perspectives on practices differ, from focusing on 'the situated doings of a practitioner (micro)' to 'the socially accepted practices (macro)' (Hällgren & Lindahl, 2012, p. 337). Karrbom Gustavson and Gohary (2012) describe practice as "what a group does" and how these actions construct a practice for that particular group of people. By referring to Orlikowski, Karrbom Gustavson also connect their take on practice to communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) by noting that practice is 'recurrent, materially bounded and situated action engaged in by members of a community' (Karrbom Gustavsson & Gohary, 2012, p. 368). Other studies refer to these situated actions as *praxis*, in line with the established strategy-as-practice direction of research (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009), and find that the organization of a project results from the 'interplay between praxis (situated actions), practices (models, guidelines and previous experiences, norms …), practitioners (individuals and their profile) and profession (Hällgren & Söderholm, 2010, p. 354), of which the latter also seems to point to a type community of practice. Thus, the understanding of what constitutes practice and how practice as such is understood and explored differ within project studies, as it also does within organizational research (Nicolini, 2012). However, common for most projects-as-practice studies is that they attend to practice by focusing on the actors, exploring their everyday actions and activities.

However, despite movements in the field, traditional studies still dominate over social science and thus projects-as-practice approaches, which is why Geraldi et al. (2018, p. 65) again recently called for more studies of actual practices in projects, stating: 'studies would not only document the difficulties and challenges that such people face, but also explore practices that they rely on to deal with these challenges and opportunities'.

The projects-as-practice perspective thus provides an approach that addresses the situational performance of practices by actors, allowing us to understand how projects are produced *by* and *in* practice. As mentioned before, a closely related sub-stream of social science project research is the process perspective, which explores the processes of projects.

2.1.2.2.2 Process perspective

Today, many studies within social science project studies apply a process perspective (Cicmil et al., 2006; Söderlund, 2004a), which underlines the processual 'becoming' perspective, rather than the 'being' or fixed, stable understanding of projects as entities (Cicmil et al., 2006). Studies within this approach aim 'to

understand what is actually going on in the arrangements labelled "project" over time' (Cicmil et al., 2006, p. 675). Rather than treating projects as 'entities' or 'tools', studies in this stream view projects as social processes and examine 'human action and interaction in project processes' (Jacobsson et al., 2016, p. 757). Addressing projects in terms of 'becoming' is closely connected to the notion of 'organizing', which is the processual understanding of organizing as unfolding in the interaction among actors.

Similarly, Lundin and Söderlund (1995, p. 437) emphasized the 'shortcomings of the normative, technical project models', and they suggested addressing projects and temporary organizations from 'inside' and emphasized the need to centre 'action'. This can be seen as a problematization of the fact that project 'were seen as tools instead of organizations' (Hällgren & Lindahl, 2012, p. 336). Lundin and Söderlund (1995) were some of the first to focus on the *becoming* nature of projects and developed the notion of projects as *temporary organizations* (TO). Temporary organizing had previously been studied in organizational research, but with Lundin and Söderholm's work it was conceptualized within the project field (Jacobsson et al., 2015). This perspective underlines the processual nature of projects (or other temporary organizations) as constantly becoming, rather than stable entities or tools.

A process perspective allows us to explore and understand the experiences of project actors and consider temporal aspects. Combining a process ontology with a practice perspective as some do (e.g. Sergi, 2012), it becomes possible to attend to practices over time and also situationally. However, although the process perspective addresses projects as processes and as becoming through actions, the field has yet to explore how projects are organized through interaction and, consequently, are understood as such in situ.

2.1.2.3 *An overview*

Figure 1, below, illustrates the field (as outlined above) and the relations between the different streams of project research as well as the relation to organizational research. The dotted lines indicate that there are other strands not covered in this review (and there are probably more strands than the number of dotted lines).

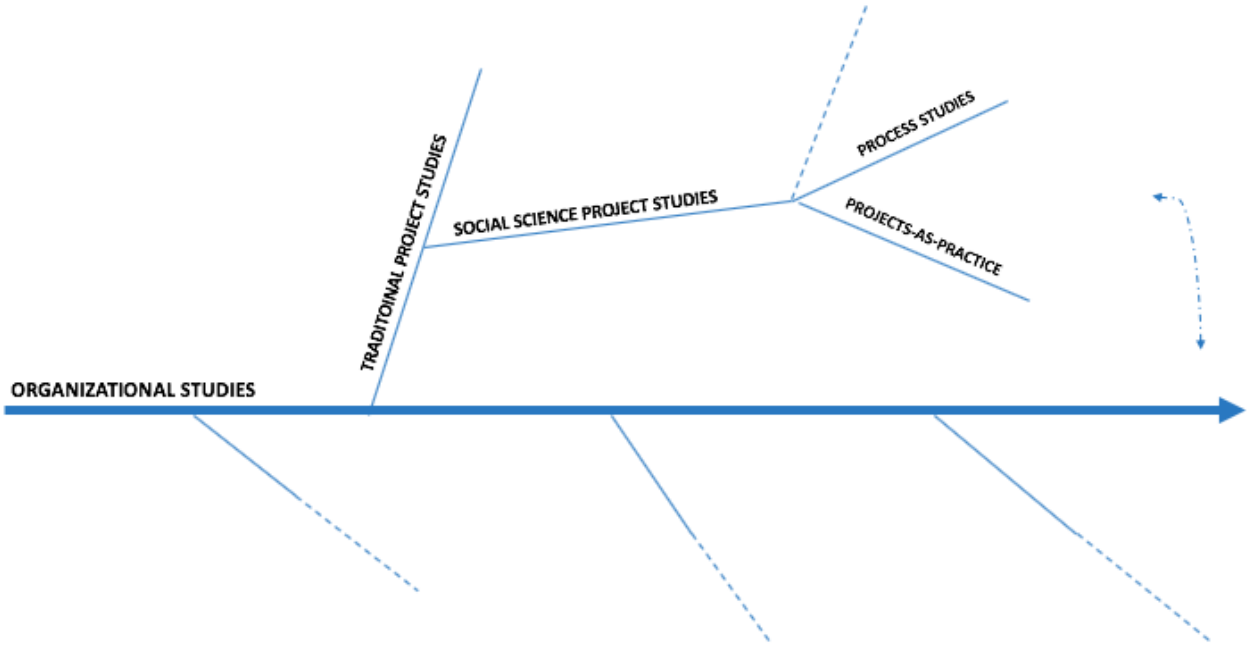


Figure 1. Illustration of the project research field

As should be clear from the above review, in terms of both research and practice the field of project studies is vast and varied and full of interesting contrasts, challenges, and questions. The theoretical field outlined above will provide a foundation as I move forward and dive into more specific areas of theory.

2.2 Global, Virtual Teams

As organizations have become projectified, they have also become globalized (Hällgren & Söderholm, 2010; Palugod & Palugod, 2011; Paasivaara & Lassenius, 2003). To meet the demands of local customers, to source talent where it might be, to reduce costs, outsource work, etc., project-based organizations have become increasingly global over the past few decades, and they have begun distributing project teams across cities, countries, and continents at a rapid rate. Globally distributed teams function as so-called *virtual teams* (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002; Townsend, Demarie, & Hendrickson, 1998). Furthermore, these distributed, virtual teams can be *interorganizational teams* (Kasper-Fuehrer & Ashkanasy, 2001; Sydow & Braun, 2018) or intra-organizational, meaning that the teams consist of members from different organizations or different organizational units.

As global, virtual teams have become more and more common in practice, research has likewise examined the phenomena. Interorganizational and virtual teams (including the use of Information Communication Technologies [ICT]) have been explored in a range of studies, some of which have focussed

particularly on project settings. Due to the empirical setting of this study, this strand of research is of relevance.

In the following section, previous research will be outlined to provide an understanding of what global, virtual, and interorganizational teams are. This review will enable reflections on the practical challenges and complexities of these global projects but will also point to research areas that are still unexplored.

2.2.1 Defining virtual teams

Twenty years ago, Townsend, Demarie and Hendrickson (1998) reviewed the collaborative possibilities offered by newly developed technologies (at that time), the development of team-based organizations, and the tendency to outsource business functions to other companies. Based on these tendencies, Townsend et al. predicted the rise of the virtual way of working:

> This new workplace will be unrestrained by geography, time, and organizational boundaries; it will be a virtual workplace, where productivity, flexibility, and collaboration will reach unprecedented new levels. (1998, p. 17)

The first part of this sentence, about an unrestrained new virtual workplace, has proven to be true, as people today can work anywhere at any time with partners across the world. The second part about productivity and collaboration is more ambivalent, as this 'new' way of working also comes with some challenges. Since Townsend et al.'s prediction, virtual teams have only become increasingly relevant, both in practice and in theory.

Virtual teams are, as mentioned above, generally defined as distributed teams collaborating through virtual technologies. Since the emergence of virtual teams in practice, studies have offered different definitions of them; however, one of the most cited definitions of virtual teams appears to be Bell and Kozlowski's (2002). They highlight that virtual teams are not just traditional teams working via technology, but that they are distinguished due to the following dimensions: temporal distribution, boundary spanning, lifecycle, and dynamic member roles. They state that the 'most critical and important feature of virtual teams is that they cross boundaries of space' (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002, p. 22), since it is 'the absence of this proximal, face-to-face interaction between members of virtual teams that makes them virtual' (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002, p. 22).

Gibson and Cohen (2003) suggest three similar attributes of virtual teams: geographical distribution of team members, the necessitated use of communication technology, and that the team functions as a team, meaning that they have interdependent tasks and shared responsibility for outcomes. They emphasize that virtual teams can be geographically distributed in different buildings, cities, or offices and note that being a virtual team does not equal a global team or multinational team, as you can be a co-located multinational

team or a virtual team located in the same city or country. Nevertheless, global teams, meaning teams that have members distributed across the world, are most likely virtual teams. Interestingly, Henderson, Stackman, and Lindekilde's (2016) later definition of *global* project teams (as distributed teams reliant on communication technology and with a shared goal) is almost identical to this definition of virtual teams, emphasizing that global teams are often virtual in practice.

There are, however, others who suggest alternative definitions of virtual teams. Kirkman and Mathieu (2005) argue that dispersion should *not* be a defining characteristic of virtual teams. They claim that the definition is too exclusive, since co-located teams can also be virtual because they often use technology to communicate. Kirkman and Mathieu claim that since co-located teams in practice do use and are somewhat reliant on virtual technology, these teams can be highly virtual. However, even though co-located teams can rely on virtual tools to perform their work, face-to-face interaction is still a possibility, which is not the case for distributed teams (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002). As such, virtuality is a *prerequisite* in distributed teams, as both Bell and Kozlowski (2002) and Gibson and Cohen (2003) argue, and it is thus through their collaborative practices the teams thus become virtual, due to dispersion. Hence, it seems that dispersion/distribution is extremely relevant, as this necessitates that teams use virtual communication, since they have no other options (except travel).

2.2.1.1 *Research on virtual teams*

Early research on virtual teams focused on how these differed from traditional teams (e.g. Warkentin, Sayeed, & Hightower, 1997); however, since the early 2000s there has been an interesting trend in focusing on a 'continuum of virtuality' (Al-Ani, Horspool, & Bligh, 2011; C. B. Gibson & Cohen, 2003; Kirkman & Mathieu, 2005; Zigurs, 2003) rather than focusing on the dichotomy between traditional and virtual teams. The concept of a continuum of virtuality emphasizes that teams can be 'more *or* less *virtual*' (Griffith, Sawyer, & Neale, 2003, p. 267). For instance, Martins, Gilson, and Maynard (2004, p. 808) find that a team's 'extent of virtualness' depends on aspects such as task, technology, and members' skills, and they point to the crossing of organizational and geographical boundaries as characteristics of virtual teams. Likewise, Zigurs (2003) addresses the concept of a virtual continuum, stressing the importance of dispersion and suggesting the following dispersion dimensions: organizational, temporal, geographical, and cultural. These dimensions are similar to the dimensions presented by Bell and Kozlowski (2002), Gibson and Cohen (2003), and Martins et al. (2004).

This focus on 'virtuality', rather than 'virtual or not', reflects a form of forward movement in the studies of virtual teams, from comparing the 'old' and 'new' types of teams to distinguishing virtual teams as a topic of interest in its own right and to focusing on 'virtualness', which enables one to address teams as more or less virtual as well as global, multicultural, interorganizational, or internally distributed.

However, even though the concepts of virtuality and virtual teams are developing, researchers still often rely on comparisons of traditional, co-located teams and virtual teams when they are examining social phenomena or challenges occurring in a virtual team setting.

Studies of challenges in virtual teams examine many perspectives: distance (Olson & Olson, 2000), ICT (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Denstadli, Julsrud, & Hjorthol, 2011; Warkentin et al., 1997), leader and employee face time (Elsbach, Cable, & Sherman, 2010), eye contact in ICT meetings (Nielsen, 2013), culture (Avison & Banks, 2008; Oertig & Buergi, 2006), and communication breakdowns (Daim et al., 2012).

For virtual teams, communicative technologies are vital, and the contingencies of technologies are also mentioned in almost all studies of virtual teams; some address technology as a moderator, others as a challenge, but very few focuses on the technology itself. These few technology-focused studies do not necessarily concentrate on virtual teams as such but rather the virtual work settings. Some of the most cited regarding virtual technology is Daft and Lengel's (1986) work on media richness (i.e. the 'richness' of the communicative resources and access the media provides). They show that media richness has a substantial impact on interaction and find that high levels of richness are needed when uncertainty is prevalent or are necessary for practitioners to process high volumes of information.

Likewise, Denstadli et al. (2011, p. 86) find that video conferences (VCs) are 'a central choice for meetings with partners and collaborators located at remote sites', but also conclude that practitioners prefer face-to-face interaction in situations where the people have not previously met, since relations and familiarity are better established in this type of communication. Related to this is Elsbach et al.'s (2010) study, which finds that *passive face time*, meaning time where an employee is seen by a manager in the office, has a positive effect on performance evaluations, even if the employee and manager do not interact. This has practical implications for perceptions of performance in virtual collaborations, where managers and employees do not see or speak to each other except in planned meetings.

According to the literature on virtual teams, the dispersion and virtualness of teams also create challenges with regard to social aspects, such as cohesion, shared understandings, team identification, trust, and leadership. In line with the social science development within project studies, research on virtual teams has also been interested in social phenomena; in particular studies have explored the implications that virtualness has on leadership (Al-Ani et al., 2011; Avolio, Sosik, Kahai, & Baker, 2014; Bell & Kozlowski, 2002; Hoch & Kozlowski, 2014; Iorio & Taylor, 2015; Nauman, Mansur Khan, & Ehsan, 2010; Zigurs, 2003). Other studies have been particularly concerned with the development and importance of trust in virtual teams (Hung, Dennis, & Robert, 2004; Kanawattanachai & Yoo, 2002; Kimble, 2011; Webster & Wong, 2008). For instance, Olson and Olson (2000) find that trust, collaboration, and work efficiency are (negatively) influenced by dispersion and lack of face time. Also, Kimble (2011) concludes that technology can create challenges with regard to the creation of common ground, trust, and identity. Olson and Olsen find that co-located teams, contrary to virtual teams, 'share not only cultural and local context, but also more

microcontext of who is doing what at the moment and what remains to be done' (2000, p. 160), creating a sense of familiarity. Similar conclusions were made by Reed and Knight (2010), Ceci and Prencipe (2013), and Cramton (2001, p. 349), who shows the creation of 'mutual knowledge' to be a problem in virtual teams, especially 'if a dispersed team spans functional, cultural and organizational boundaries'.

In sum, developments in research on virtual teams demonstrate that we need to consider virtual teams on a continuum rather than as virtual or not, and that virtual teams have distinct challenges compared to local teams. Previous research informs us that virtual teams are challenged not only due to reduced communicative accessibility but that this use of virtual media as well as the distance between members and the crossing of organizational, functional, and/or cultural boundaries challenges the accomplishment of the work as well as the development of trust, social cohesion, and knowledge sharing.

2.2.2 Intra- and interorganizational teams

Interorganizational project team consist of members from different organizations (Stock, 2006) who need to collaborate across organizational, and often geographical and cultural, boundaries. Similarly, members of intra-organizational projects may need to collaborate across geographical and cultural boundaries, and although they come from the same organization, they usually come from different organizational functions, units, or departments, and thus work across intra-organizational boundaries.

Within organizational research, interorganizational relationships (IORs) in particular have been an area of interest for many years (Dyer & Singh, 1998; Oliver, 1990; Smith, Carroll, & Ashford, 1995). The increasing globalization and interconnectedness of organizations continues to make these an area of interest. The study of IORs is historically connected to different areas of study, such as supply chain management, operational management, and strategic networks (Brinkhoff, Özer, & Sargut, 2015; Ellis & Ybema, 2010; Huemer, Becerra, & Lunnan, 2004), and with the increased outsourcing of project work they have also been of growing interest within project studies (Leufkens & Noorderhaven, 2011; Maurer, 2010; Sydow & Braun, 2018; Thomé, Scavarda, Scavarda, & Thomé, 2016). The interest in IORs has led to diverse literature on the topic, and, rather than outlining the entire field, I will here focus primarily on research on IORs or interorganizational project teams within the field of project studies.

Contrary to organizational studies, the relevance of interorganizational perspectives has been somewhat under-researched within project studies, although not completely ignored (Kasper-Fuehrer & Ashkanasy, 2001; Manning, 2008; Thamhain, 2013; Vaaland & Håkansson, 2003). Söderlund (2004b) highlights that in the *International Journal of Project Management*, the central journal in the field, interorganizational (or inter-firm) aspects have previously been overlooked but are gaining increasing attention. He shows two

trends in research of interorganizational projects: one stream of research that focuses on 'the transaction costs and the role and limits of contracts and opportunistic behavior' and another stream that is interested in relational aspects, particularly in 'the network aspects of projects, e.g., the building of relationships between the actors and the pooling of resources' (Söderlund, 2004b, p. 660).

Similarly, Sydow and Braun (2018) call for more theorizing of interorganizational projects (IOPs), concluding that previous conceptualizations of projects (e.g. as temporary teams) fail to include the interorganizational aspect. They define IOPs as project collaborations between two organizations, emphasizing that these, contrary to project networks, may 'potentially have neither a past nor a future beyond the present collaboration' (Sydow & Braun, 2018, p. 7). Sydow and Braun align with Söderlund's (2004b, p. 663) call for research to be attentive to the 'organizational problematics, such as knowledge sharing, trust and cultural aspects of inter-firm projects', aspects that have previously been coupled with project performance (Crisp & Jarvenpaa, 2013; J. Y. Han & Hovav, 2013; Henderson et al., 2016; Jarvenpaa & Tanriverdi, 2003; Webster & Wong, 2008).

Looking across project studies, it seems that an increasing number of studies are in fact focusing on IOPs (Bakker, Knoben, de Vries, & Oerlemans, 2011; Dille & Söderlund, 2011; Kalkman & de Waard, 2017; Leufkens & Noorderhaven, 2011; Thamhain, 2013; von Danwitz, 2018), and several studies are meeting the call by focusing on trust and knowledge sharing in these teams (Brinkhoff et al., 2015; Kasper-Fuehrer & Ashkanasy, 2001; Maurer, 2010; Nesheim & Hunskaar, 2015). Knowledge sharing is vital for project success in general, but as members of interorganizational projects have less shared knowledge (e.g. contextual, functional, organizational, tacit, and personal knowledge), knowledge sharing practices become very important. Nesheim and Hunskaar (2015) conclude that the project team members tend to share more knowledge with their 'in-group' than their 'out-group' (Nesheim & Hunskaar, 2015), meaning internals share with internals, and external consultants share with external consultants. The differences in knowledge sharing are strongly related to project attachment (which seems to be similar to the concept of identification, section 3.2). This is consequential for organizations, which are reliant on external resources.

Previous studies inform us of some of the difficulties in establishing collaboration and ensuring knowledge sharing, trust, etc. in interorganizational projects. However, the studies stop short of exploring how collaboration in intra-organizational as well as interorganizational projects unfold in practice, nor do they explore identification (or attachment) processes from a members' perspective. In fact, intra-organizational *projects* seem to be rarely explored; rather, it seems that primarily intra-organizational relations or structure have been in focus in organizational research (Aiken & Hage, 1968; Li, 2005; Smith et al., 1995). The underlying assumption in the previous project research appears to be that collaboration between actors from different organizations is more difficult, or at least more interesting, than collaboration between intra-organizational project partners. In that sense, organizational boundaries (and the subsequent differences in culture, contexts, etc.) are taken as more difficult to 'cross' than the boundaries that internals

'cross' or (possibly) construct. This can be seen as an orientation to presupposed structures/boundaries rather than practice. Instead of taking (organizational) boundaries as given and as inherently problematic to cross, it would be interesting to explore how project actors in both intra- and interorganizational collaborations in situ orient to boundaries and how this influences the production of identifications. To better understand these matters seems particularly important for practice but also for research, since interorganizational projects only appear to be increasing in number (Sydow & Braun, 2018).

In sum, the above review of the diverse literature on global, virtual, and interorganizational project teams indicates the tangible and intangible challenges of working in these complex project contexts. However, despite the range of studies, there are still matters left unexplored. Thus, it seems relevant to attend to the call for more studies of project practices and examine virtual, intra-, and interorganizational teams' collaborations from this perspective by examining what actually takes place in practice and treating the actors' actions as situated. By exploring *how* actors in practice accomplish their work despite being challenged with regard to knowledge sharing, lack of shared contexts, trust development, performance perceptions, cohesion, attachment, etc. and also how they come to understand the project team as a team, we may then better understand how these virtual, interorganizational teams 'function' in practice.

2.3 Project Complexity, Uncertainty, and Unexpectedness

Another area of project research that is of relevance for this particular study is studies of complexity, uncertainty, and unexpectedness in project contexts. Even though the aim of this study is not to examine the concepts of complexity or uncertainty as such but rather to understand project actors' actions, practices, and meaning-making, it seems necessary to outline perspectives on complexity, uncertainty, and unexpectedness in order to engage in dialogue with previous studies.

The following section will first outline previous conceptualizations of (project) complexity and uncertainty. Then, studies on project unexpectedness will be outlined, and, finally, this study's position in this strand of research will be outlined.

2.3.1 Complexity and uncertainty

In the following, we will review previous literature on project complexity and uncertainty and formulate how the concepts are used in this study.

Throughout the past century, a wide range of studies have wanted to understand and conceptualize complexity and uncertainty. The range of studies covers such diverse research fields as biology, economy,

physics, and of course organizational studies, fields that have all addressed and conceptualized complexity in a variety of ways (Marion, 2008).

With regard to organizational research, organizations are in general in themselves considered complex and dynamic, and subsequently uncertain. To handle this uncertainty, organizations produce organized activities (Cyert & March, 1993) such as routines, standard operating procedures, etc. (Becker & Knudsen, 2005; Feldman, Pentland, D'Adderio, & Lazaric, 2016). Within organizational studies, the term 'complexity theory' is used as a broad label covering several directions within *complexity research* (Goldstein, 2008). In general, in complexity research, much attention has been paid to 'systems' and complexity within/between systems; systems being either structures, teams, organizations, networks, or more abstract notions.

Within the project literature, complexity as a theoretical concept is rarely discussed and defined; however, a number of researchers have considered it (Floricel, Michela, & Piperca, 2016; Geraldi, Maylor, & Williams, 2011; Pich, Loch, & Meyer, 2002; Williams, 1999). In general, the definitions of the concepts of complexity and uncertainty seem somewhat fragmented, as Geraldi et al. (2011) suggest in their review of theoretical approaches to complexity in project contexts. They find there to be several dimensions of complexity and define uncertainty as an aspect of complexity, pointing to two theoretical approaches to uncertainty as either connected to 'variety (the probability and chance of an event)' or as 'epistemic uncertainty (lack of information, lack of agreement over current and future situation, or ambiguity)' (Geraldi et al., 2011, p. 978). A similar concept is *information adequacy* (Pich et al., 2002), which Pich et al. find to be 'caused either by events or causality being unknown (ambiguity), or by an inability to evaluate the effects of actions because too many variables interact (complexity)' (Pich et al., 2002, p. 1009). These conceptualizations can be understood in such a way that complexity is connected *to the project* as such and can produce ambiguity *for the project actors* in the settings; thus, rather than projects in themselves being ambiguous or uncertain, they are experienced as such due to complexity.

One of the clearest definitions of the concepts of ambiguity and uncertainty are presented by Walker et al. (2017). Here uncertainty is connected to knowledge or lack thereof, in that the more knowledge the actors have, the less uncertainty. Ambiguity is also connected to knowledge but can more generally be understood as the 'existence of multiple and conflicting interpretations' (Walker, Davis, & Stevenson, 2017, p. 180), which can produce confusion or possibly conflict. Thus, uncertainty seems a matter of acquiring more or the right knowledge, whereas ambiguity seems to be a matter of interpretation and possibly negation. What studies such as these do not illustrate is the local contingencies that create the particular uncertainty/ambiguity nor the situated management of this

Furthermore, within the project literature, projects are often described as *inherently uncertain* in themselves and that this uncertainty, which gives leeway for unexpected events in the project settings, then needs to be handled by the actors (Böhle, Heidling, & Schoper, 2016; Hällgren & Maaninen-Olsson, 2005). Other studies refer to *environmental uncertainty* (Perminova, Gustafsson, & Wikström, 2008), which is

understood as uncertainty emerging from the complex, organizational environment (Geraldi, Lee-Kelley, & Kutsch, 2010) due to changing politics, many stakeholders, distribution of teams, changeable customer goals, etc. These terms are however somewhat unclearly defined, and it seems that these features, which here make the projects uncertain, are also in fact what enables us to characterize projects as *complex*. That is, as noted by Padalkar and Gopinath (2016a, p. 695), 'projects function within a complex organizational environment of interdependent units, processes and actors'. Thus, the setting can be considered to be 'complex' due to high degrees of interconnectedness, many interdependencies, as well as high numbers of (more or less) involved stakeholders. Considering this in relation to Geraldi et al.'s (2011) distinction of uncertainty as a dimension of complexity, it seems that the projects or their environment may not be inherently uncertain but instead complex, and that this is experienced as uncertainty by the members. This points to a problem discussed by Padalkar and Gopinath, namely that the project literature has yet to provide clear 'constructs of complexity and uncertainty' (2016a, p. 692).

Considering all of the above, it seems that complexity and uncertainty are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature – which is understandable qua the close connection but makes it difficult to use the concepts. Further it seems that uncertainty is theoretically understood as 'occurring' on two levels: 1) *environmental uncertainty*, which appears to be very closely linked with *environmental complexity*, and 2) *uncertainty on an actor level*, that is, the uncertainty the actors experience and orient to in practice. It would be beneficial for project research to construct clear understandings across, or to at least identify, the levels at which we are referring to complexity and uncertainty and how we can access these matters empirically.

This study attempts to separate the two concepts by using complexity in relation to the project environment and uncertainty and ambiguity in relation to the perceptions and orientations of the project actors: That is, complexity is connected *to the project* as such and can produce ambiguity *for the project actors* in the settings; thus, rather than projects in themselves being ambiguous or uncertain, they may be experienced as such due to complexity.

The study will not rely on a priori assumptions about intrinsic uncertainty but will instead attend to practice; namely, to the actors' orientations and displays of what *they* take to be ambiguous and treat as uncertain. The actors may treat these matters as emerging from the environment, but we will not a priori take the environment to be uncertain in itself; the project environment can be complex, but we reserve the notion of uncertainty to how the actors talk about, understand, and treat their work setting.

In the following section, we review literature that is concerned with *how* actors manage uncertainties and unexpected events in projects.

2.3.2 The unexpectedness of projects

In the following, previous studies of unexpected events or deviations in projects will be reviewed, focusing particularly on studies that examine unexpectedness in practice.

As the review will illustrate, projects are not 'clearly defined and unambiguous' (Packendorff, 1995, p. 321), as is often implied in traditional project research, but are instead complex work contexts (Geraldi et al., 2011). The complexity implies that 'irrespective of the amount of planning, unexpected unplanned events – deviations from the expectations – occur in project management' (Hällgren, 2007, p. 774). This distinction is critical for understanding the empirical field of this study and for understanding why there is need to explore project practices, rather than producing generic project models. It is important to note that although we have just attempted to make a clear separation between complexity and uncertainty, the following studies have divergent approaches to complexity and several take project environments to be inherently uncertain.

Within studies of unexpectedness in projects, the two terms *deviations* and *unexpected events* are used, either as distinguishable or interchangeable. Hällgren and Maaninen-Olsson (2005, p. 18) refer to a deviation as 'a situation, regardless of consequence—positive or negative, large or small— that deviates from any plan in the project'. They emphasize that risk, change, and deviations differ in that 'the first two only recognize major happenings and leave out situations with presumably less consequence on the iron triangle of cost, time and scope' (Hällgren & Maaninen-Olsson, 2005, p. 18). In other studies, however, deviations are for instance defined 'as unexpected events that require attention from the project team' (Hällgren & Söderholm, 2010, p. 353), and it is made clear that in all projects 'unforeseen interruptions' (Hällgren & Söderholm, 2010, p. 353) occur. One way to differentiate between the two terms seems to be to characterize unexpected events as events that occur and require attention from the project team and that *can* have direct consequences for the project plan, whereas deviations are what happens to the project plan because of unexpected events.

Another related term is *risks*, which are matters that are identified as possible problems that may (or may not) occur. Unexpected events, in contrast, are potential and unforeseeable and must be handled situationally when they occur (Hällgren & Maaninen-Olsson 2005; Böhle et al. 2015) – they are problems not foreseen or captured by risk management. As noted by Böhle et al. (2016, p. 1383): 'An important task of risk management is to transform uncertainty into risk as far as possible in order to make it plannable and controllable'. Thus, here, uncertainties need to be identified as such by the actors in order to be classified as risk. In that sense, something *becomes* a risk through the process of identifying it as one, which can also be said of unexpected events. Recently, Thamhain (2013) has explored how risks are dealt with, and he claims that organizations and practitioners are 'weak in dealing with the hidden, less-obvious aspects of uncertainty' (Thamhain, 2013, p. 20).

Within project studies, but also within organizational research in general, the number of studies of unexpectedness has grown vastly in recent decades. In organizational studies, research has attempted to uncover the nature of the unexpected events and how the actor manages these (Bechky & Okhuysen, 2011;

Cunha, Clegg, & Kamoche, 2006). Similarly, within project research, studies have been interested in how project practitioners handle unexpectedness and 'overcome' these and actually achieve organized actions to enable progression of the project. For instance, Hällgren (2007) concludes that project practitioners may perform actions that are deemed 'good enough' but which do not follow procedure, due to the urgent need for a resolution: 'When time is a scarce resource, as in a project, the decision seems to be pushed away from formal methods associated with the plan' (2007, p. 778). In relation to this, Geraldi et al. (2010) consider what is perceived as successful handling and argue that the severity of the event in terms of impact influences the actors' response actions. Hällgren and Söderholm (2010) also identified patterns in how project managers approach and manage deviations in projects, finding that the actors either 1) first take some sort of action and then seek more information about the deviation (first responsiveness and then distinctiveness) or 2) first find more information and then act (first distinctiveness and then responsiveness). Hällgren and Söderholm connect these findings to the concept of *loose coupling*, referring to Orton and Weick (1990), and show that some project activities or elements can be stalled while other activities are able to continue, thus demonstrating how the overall project can carry on despite deviations. Based on this, the study concludes that projects should be 'depicted more accurately as a combination of periods of tight coupling changing to periods of loose coupling and back again' and should be 'characterized by deviations rather than by pre-defined execution of plans' (Hällgren & Söderholm, 2010, p. 365).

These studies show that unexpected events cause or make visible different kinds of epistemic uncertainty, but also that actors using their competences and logic/reasoning can in fact produce what they consider to be relevant actions. In particular, it seems that existing knowledge or access to knowledge are critical for response actions, making the notions of epistemic uncertainty (Geraldi et al., 2011) or information adequacy (Pich et al., 2002) relevant.

Some studies focus more specifically on the links between project environment, unexpected events, and responses (Hällgren & Maaninen-Olsson, 2005; Söderholm, 2008). These studies find that environmental uncertainties (what can also be considered environmental complexity) produce unexpected events, but also that these events in turn also impact the organizations. In doing so, the studies reveal the complexities of dealing with unexpected events while simultaneously identifying and managing possible derailments of the project plan. More generally, these studies problematize the connection between project and environment. As stated by Hällgren and Maaninen-Olsson (2005, p. 25):

> projects should be understood as embedded in its surrounding context. The project is, not very surprisingly, affected by the context in which it is executed, and it also, in turn, affects the surrounding context. (2005, p. 25)

Similarly, Söderholm (2008) argues that the general depictions of project environments do not capture actual practices, complexities, or challenges, and he concludes that 'projects have to be considered as being

contextually dependent and continuously contingent on environmental relations' (2008, p. 84). Thereby, he stresses the substantial impact that environments have on individual projects and vice versa.

Unexpected events have also been explored from other perspectives, such as discursive approaches. For instance, Musca, Mellet, Simoni, Sitri, & de Vogüé (2014) examine the discursive construction of project renewal, necessary due to derailing unexpected events. They conclude that actors reach collective sensemaking through talk and the use of materials (e.g. a logbook) and that this sensemaking enables them to organize action. They compare their findings with those of Weick (1993), who through the study of a group in dissolution showed the importance of shared sensemaking in order to achieve coordinated action. Musca et al. states: 'Within fast-paced, unexpected and uncertain environments ... action takes place through an ongoing flow of constant change' (2014, p. 1158). This suggests that, in practice, actors need to constantly adapt to and navigate in ever-changing environments. Similarly, Havermans, Keegan, & Den Hartog (2015) investigate leaders' construction of narratives in projects challenged by 'emergent problems'. Their study demonstrates that narratives are resources for achieving sensemaking and thereby have direct implications with regard to problem resolution. Previous studies within project management have focused more on actions rather than talk, but Havermans et al. (2015) and Musca et al. (2014) illustrate the constitutive power of talk, in that talk directly relates to sensemaking and thereby to the performing of organizational activities.

It seems that in the project literature there is a tendency to focus on severe or highly problematic cases of unexpected events and deviations to the projects. For instance, several papers explore mountaineering (Hällgren, 2007; Musca et al., 2014) or construction projects (Doloi, Sawhney, Iyer, & Rentala, 2012; Shehu, Endut, Akintoye, & Holt, 2014). These instances are often a priori considered 'extreme' or 'deviations', without first attending to the actors' understandings. However, what we as analysts consider extreme or non-extreme situations can be interpreted by the actors completely differently. Just because it is 'risky business' to climb a mountain, the actors may not find deviations to the plan to be extreme or produce uncertainty, whereas seemingly minor problems may in fact have tremendous influence and produce much uncertainty for the team members. Thus, it would also be interesting to examine the practitioners' perspectives in order to define what is extreme, what is unexpected, and how deviations impact the daily work. It seems that these definitions in practice could be a question of membership knowledge and competence, in the sense that it is through these that matters are situationally made sense of and qua these that actors can in fact handle unexpected problems.

After reviewing the literature on complexity and unexpectedness, there appears to be a paradox between the understanding of projects as controllable entities and the complexity of projects in practice; a tension between unpredictability and control, as Cicmil et al. (2006) have noted. In this context, 'unexpected events' are to be understood as the opposite of 'produced events'. The previous findings are interesting, but it is

relevant to further examine unexpected events in practice by looking at the situated management of episodes of unexpectedness.

3 Theoretical Concepts

In this chapter, the theoretical concepts that will be of use in the analytical chapters will be described, questioned, and positioned within this study. First, the concept of *routines* and relevant literature on routines will be introduced, and then the concept of *identification* and a number of studies relevant for this concept will be outlined.

3.1 Routines

Previous studies of projects suggest that there is a discrepancy between the effort to standardize and the complexity and constant changes in project settings (Hällgren, Nilsson, Blomquist, & Söderholm, 2012). Many organizations have become 'projectified' (Söderholm, 2008, p. 85) and organize projects according to organizationally defined standards. The paradox is that although projects become 'routine' in organizations, what they aim to produce is the opposite, as they often develop new systems, processes, or products – in that way, they produce 'the new and different' within the routine setting. At the same time as the projects are managed according to organizational standards for risk management, planning, etc. (Hällgren et al., 2012), previous research also shows that the projects are influenced by the complexity of the project setting, causing ambiguity, uncertainty, and potentially unexpected issues (section 2.3). It is precisely this tension between continuous efforts to organize actions both in projects and at an organizational level and the ambiguity and unexpectedness of projects that makes it particularly interesting to look at routines in this setting.

The following section will review current studies on routines within the organizational literature in order to understand the concept of routine. The intention with this section is to introduce, question, and define the concept of routines that will be applied in the analytical sections.

3.1.1 Routines as flexible

Routines have been conceptualized by some as sources of organization and stability in organizations (Becker, 2004). However, in recent decades, routines have also been conceptualized in a process perspective as being dependent on agency, as changeable, and as dynamic due to the varying performances of actors (Howard-Grenville, Rerup, Langley, & Tsoukas, 2016). Thus, routine studies follow the trend in organizational research and have adopted practice- or process-oriented perspectives, as per the linguistic turn

(Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000) and the practice turn (Schatzki et al., 2001), moving away from focusing on the influence of structures. Currently, a dominant understanding of routines is found in the *routine dynamics* literature (Feldman et al., 2016), which defines routines as 'repetitive, recognizable patterns of interdependent actions, carried out by multiple actors' (Feldman & Pentland, 2003, p. 95).

Within the routine dynamics perspective (Feldman, 2016; Feldman & Pentland, 2003), routines are seen as coming into existence through an interplay between ostensive and performative levels, concepts that were first introduced by Latour (1986). The ostensive aspects of routines are referred to as shared cognitive schemata or scripts for how activities should unfold: 'The ostensive aspect of a routine shapes our perception of what the routine is' (Feldman & Pentland, 2003, p. 101). Feldman and Pentland (2003) argue that routines exist *in principle* as structure (ostensive aspects) and *in practice* as agency (the performative aspect), and thus the ostensive and the performative aspects are understood as mutually constitutive, as the ostensive provides sense and meaning to the performative but also only becomes apparent through the performance. The introduction of the performative aspect of routines means that routines have come to be conceptualized as changeable. Thus, in this understanding of routines, as originally presented by Feldman and Pentland (2003), routines can be *flexibly performed*, and are subsequently not taken as expressions of stability, inflexibility, or as reducing reflexivity, as some previous literature on routines has found (Weiss & Ilgen, 1985).

3.1.1.1 *The ostensive as interactionally accomplished*

The understanding of the ostensive as a cognitive phenomenon that is expressed through performance is problematized by recent ethnomethodologically informed studies that instead argue that 'the ostensive aspect, i.e. the generalized idea about a routine, is a reflexive part of the performative aspect, i.e. situated performance' (Yamauchi & Hiramoto, 2016, p. 1478). Through studies of interaction, LeBaron, Christianson, Garrett, and Ilan (2016), Aggerholm and Asmuß (2016), and Yamauchi and Hiramoto (2016) stress the need for the production of mutual intelligibility during the performance of the routine in order to actually produce the routine itself.

The studies each demonstrate empirically that the shared understanding of the routine is constituted *during* the performance through coordinated verbal and bodily contributions and is simultaneously used *in* the performance to reflexively recognize, make actions recognizable, and collectively organize the activity as that particular routine (Aggerholm & Asmuß, 2016; LeBaron, Christianson, Garrett, & Ilan, 2016; Yamauchi & Hiramoto, 2016). As Aggerholm and Asmuß (2016, p. 144) emphasize, actors have freedom to 'interpret given situations and perform routines', but actors are at the same time restricted by 'a predefined repertoire of discursive action paths to choose from" (Aggerholm & Asmuß, 2016, p. 148); actions are thus not performed randomly but need to be accountable, recognizable, sequentially relevant, and sensible in the

ongoing interaction. Thereby the actors coordinate actions to perform the routine activity in such a way that it is recognizable as *that* routine activity.

In these studies, the 'ostensive' is thus not taken as existing independently or as 'steering' the routine performance, but rather the actors produce actions that are accountable in situ, thereby jointly producing the activity as that routine through their actions. That is, it matters how understandings are presented (or made available) to others through actions, as this influences the collective, intersubjective, meaning making process – that is, the ostensive aspect *in practice*.

This is of importance, as it suggests that actors cannot just 'draw' on ostensive aspects to initiate a routine activity, but in fact continuously need to orient towards each other's actions to produce accountable, sensible next actions that constitute the routine as *that* routine and thereby recognizable as such. This implies a reconceptualization of the ostensive aspect of routines as an 'inter-subjective level construct' (Yamauchi & Hiramoto, 2016, p. 1494); that is, the ostensive aspect is understood as socially produced understandings, rather than a subjective, cognitive construct.

This is thus a radically different conceptualization of routines than the one presented by Feldman and Pentland (2003). A similar reconceptualization was argued by Suchman (1985, 2006), who in her studies of plans proposes a reconceptualization of plans as *situated* rather than deterministic. In her work, Suchman proposes to reframe plans 'from mental control structures that universally precede and determine actions, to discursive resources produced and used within the course of certain forms of human activity' (2003, p. 299). Thus, Suchman's redefinition here corresponds to the above suggested redefinition of the ostensive aspect of routines; that is, the ostensive is not understood as maintained through or structuring the performance of the routine, instead the ostensive is situationally constructed and reconstructed - through the construction of mutual intelligibility, the actors produce the routine *as* that routine.

This understanding of the ostensive has analytical implications, and it becomes possible to examine how ostensive aspects are talked into being, produced *as* 'ostensive', and thus how they are relevant for the constitution and recognition of routines. The point is not that everything is situationally produced, rather that actors' experiences etc. are situationally used to constitute routines as such and to be recognizable to the others as such in situ.

3.1.1.2 *Routines as reflexively performed*

By defining routines as 'repetitive, recognizable patterns of interdependent actions, carried out by multiple actors' (Feldman & Pentland, 2003, p. 95) and as consisting of both ostensive and performative aspects, Feldman and Pentland (2003) emphasized that these patterns of actions can be flexibly performed. By exploring the 'turns-at-talk' in routine activities, other studies have demonstrated this flexible performance in practice and shown the interactional efforts of coordinating talk and actions to construct routines as

recognizable (LeBaron et al., 2016). Aggerholm and Asmuß (2016) have demonstrated the variety of performances of an organizational routine *as* it unfolded and thus how the performativity is flexible but still makes the activity performed *recognizable* as the routine. By exploring 'micro-level interaction between manager and employee in performing an organizational routine' (Aggerholm & Asmuß, 2016, p. 142) Aggerholm and Asmuß demonstrate how routines through flexible performances can be accomplished and recognized as specific organizational routines. This makes it apparent how 'participants on a micro-level interrelate their individual courses of action in order to form these repetitive, recognizable patterns of action' (Aggerholm & Asmuß, 2016, p. 141).

Feldman and Pentlands' (2003, p. 95) definition of routines as 'repetitive, recognizable patterns of interdependent actions' underlines routines as *recognizable*. The notion of recognizability is here only considered with regard to the recognizability of the patterns of actions, constituting the routine. However, other studies (e.g. Yamauchi & Hiramoto, 2016) have shown that recognizability is not only relevant to recognize *patterns* of actions but also relevant for recognizing specific actions as efforts to produce a routine activity.

Yamauchi and Hiramoto (2016) argue that reflexivity is integral for the recognizability and accomplishment of routines. LeBaron et al. (2016, p. 529) demonstrate the 'the need for ongoing coordinating despite a strongly shared ostensive pattern', but Yamauchi and Hiramoto (2016) show that shared ostensive patterns are not necessary for the accomplishment of a routine; instead, this is accomplished through accountable, reflexive actions. In their study, they draw on an ethnomethodological notion of reflexivity that assumes that 'participants themselves present and use their own understandings of a routine within the performance of the routine' (Yamauchi & Hiramoto, 2016, p. 1474). Yamauchi and Hiramoto find that:

> the routine is achieved not because participants share the same schemata of the routine, but because at each moment they observe differences in understandings and take subsequent actions accordingly to render the interaction routine (2016, p. 1493)

Thus, although actors may not have shared understandings of the routines, the actors can *reflexively* coordinate accountable actions and thereby make it *recognizable* to each other what activity they are engaging in, thereby accomplishing the routine activity. As Suchman (2003, p. 300) also points to, the 'character of our actions is not, in this sense, inherent but is demonstrably achieved'.

Thus, in this perspective, the ostensive is not separable from the performative; rather, the 'definitions of a routine are performed; and this performance is reflexively presented and observed as part of a routine' (Yamauchi & Hiramoto, 2016, p. 1495). Similarly, Suchman (2006, p. 70) has noted that rather than 'attempt to abstract action away from its circumstances', we should 'study how people use their circumstances to

achieve intelligent action', that is, how actors accomplish mutual understandings of their activities through the situated performance of actions.

In a sense, this calls into question the assumption that routines are connected to 'what we usually do' and that reconciled prior understandings (Feldman & Pentland, 2003; Yamauchi & Hiramoto, 2016) are necessary for the performance of routines. Instead routines are reconceptualized as accomplished and defined through reflexive actions *during* the interactions; that is, the ostensive is understood as constructed situationally through the actors' performance of actions and it can simultaneously reflexively be used as a resource in the performance.

3.1.1.3 *Routines in projects*

In project research literature, routines are mostly mentioned in relation to 'routine tasks' or 'routinization of operations' (Modig, 2007, p. 810) and often appear to be paralleled with standard operating procedures. Routines are implicitly treated as stable and stabilizing matters. There are some instances where routines are considered changeable, although without reference to current theoretical understandings of routines as dynamic (e.g. Karrbom Gustavsson, 2014). Others, such as Söderlund, Vaagaasar, and Andersen (2008), find that *routinizing* as well as *relating* and *reflecting* are central competences for project actors. Although routinizing is central here, it is not connected to the substantial work on routines in the organizational literature. Stettina and Hörz (2015) are some the few within project studies who draw on the routine dynamics literature, referring directly to Pentland and Feldman's notion of routines; however, the paper does not unfold what the dynamic understanding of routines implies for their findings. Thus, within the project literature, the concept of routines is rarely used, and newer understandings of the nature of routines are not implemented in this line of research.

3.1.2 Routine and practice

As might be obvious to the reader, the notion of routines bears a certain resemblance to the notion of practice. The concept of practice has experience a substantial revival in recent years (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Llewellyn & Hindmarsh, 2010; Llewellyn & Spence, 2009; Schatzki et al., 2001) and is somewhat of a 'wide' concept that is used often and rarely defined. Practice seems to deal with 'what we consider normal and has become central in much social science: where scholars once 'spoke of "structures," "systems," "meaning," "life world," "events," and "actions" when naming the primary generic social thing. Today, many theorists would accord "practices" a comparable honor' (Schatzki et al., 2001, p. 10). Consequently, practice as a concept is widely used and is apparently understood is various ways. As Schatzki (2001, p. 11)

notes, given the 'multiplicity of impulses, issues, and oppositions, it is not surprising that there is no unified practice approach'.

The practice perspective in organizational research is concerned with a variety of phenomena, such as strategy (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009) or technology use (Orlikowski, 2000). However, within these individual fields there is also apparently diversity in terms of defining practice. For instance, within the field of *strategy-as-practice*, 'there is no dominant view on practices' (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009, p. 69), and one of the problems seems to be that practices, empirically, 'are entangled and interrelated elements of activity. It is thus hard to separate one particular "practice" from the interwoven fabric of practices' (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009, p. 81). Generally in organizational theory, 'practices tend to be summarized as the daily activities and doing of actors in context' and are understood as *situated*, as 'embedded in a geographic, politic, cultural, industrial and temporal contexts' (Sergi, 2012, p. 347).

In an ethnomethodological take on practice, Llewellyn and Spence (2009, p. 1419) state that what 'people draw upon, monitor, recognize, evaluate and "orient to" matters usually glossed by the term practice, such as distinctive presuppositions, identities, regular ways of going on, definitions of normality'. Practice is here understood as 'reproduced through ordinary activity, but at the same time practice is a resource that enables people to recognize and assemble situated activities' (Llewellyn & Spence, 2009, p. 1420). In contrast, routines are generally understood as constituted of patterns of interdependent, repetitive actions (Feldman & Pentland, 2003), and the literature on routines seems more unified than that on practice. Although the term practice is used in routine literature, it is not clearly defined, nor does practice literature seem to define routines.

The conceptual framework chosen seems to be a matter of the literature that studies are aiming to contribute to. In some instances, the empirical materials can be very similar, but the conceptual framing sets studies apart and influences how the analytical findings are understood. For instance, Aggerholm and Asmuß (2016) study performance appraisal interviews as organizational routines, whereas Llewellyn (2010) explores the very similar situation of a recruitment interview as practice. Analytical findings from both studies could be understood in a routine or practice perspective, but as they each open for different theoretical discussions, it seems to become an active choice of perspective. Analytical findings from both studies could be understood in routine or practice perspectives, and it becomes a conceptual consideration, whether to draw on routines or practices as both can be considered situated doings of the practitioners.

In project studies, the term practice is frequently used, but is rarely defined. However, building on the concept of practice as used in the strategy-as-practice research field (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009), a particular strand of research explores projects-as-practice (Blomquist et al., 2010) (as outlined in section 2.1.2.2). In in this perspective it becomes possible to attend to phenomena such as repetitive actions, consider this in a routine perspective, while also attending to activities as part of the practitioners' (more general) project practices.

This study is positioned within this projects-as-practice research, since it contributes to understanding the practices of projects by exploring fundamentally ethnomethodological questions of how project actors produce situational sensemaking and accomplish mundane activities.

3.1.3 In the context of this study

The previous studies suggest different conceptualizations for routines. In the following, it will be considered in what way the concept will be used in this study and how the reviewed studies are of relevance going forward.

This study draws on ethnomethodology and conceptualizations of routines where the ostensive aspect is taken as mutual understandings that, like the performances of actions, are situationally produced (Aggerholm & Asmuß, 2016; LeBaron et al., 2016; Yamauchi & Hiramoto, 2016). The previous studies emphasize the recognizability of patterns of actions (Feldman & Pentland, 2003) and demonstrated how micro-level actions contribute to the accomplishment and recognizability of specific routine activities as those routine activities. This has analytical implications, as it becomes possible to both address overall patterns of actions (e.g. across project settings) in a routines perspective but also to use the concept to consider patterns on micro-level, exploring empirically what is treated or recognized as routine and even if interactions are routinized. In doing so, a central notion is the concept of *next-turn proof procedure* (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974), which exactly attends to how actors reflexively relate their actions to previous action in order to produce mutual intelligibility. This concept exactly highlights the reflexive accomplishment of collectively sensible actions.

Furthermore, an aspect that the previous studies do not consider is the apparent connection between the concept of routines and the notion of *doing being ordinary* (Sacks, 1984), which refers to the efforts of actors to make their verbal and bodily contributions appear ordinary and thus understandable to others. By applying the concept of 'doing being ordinary', it becomes possible to address and observe the ordinariness of everyday interactions, which can otherwise be hard to identify, and to subsequently identify what is out of the ordinary, exceptional, and requires specific attention. This seems relevant for the concept of routines and the empirical exploration of routine situations, in that we must assume that when actors collectively engage in actions and produce routines as such, they simultaneously produce the routine as situationally appropriate and perhaps even as ordinary. Garfinkel (1967, p. 9) notes that 'by his accounting practices the member makes familiar, commonplace activities of everyday life recognizable as familiar, commonplace activities'. Following this, it is not simply the recurrence of an activity in itself that constitutes the routine but rather the fact that the actors *recognize* the activities and actions as recurrent and as a pattern.

Following an ethnomethodological approach, we need to attend analytically to emic phenomena, rather than etic; thus, rather than treating activities as routine a priori, we need to explore what is treated as ordinary and examine patterns of actions in and across interactions.

Finally, this study will attend to an apparent gap in the project studies literature, in that it will draw on current conceptualizations of routines to understand the project actors' actions and activities and consider the impact of routines in settings that are apparently both changeable and complex, thereby contributing to our understanding of projects in practice.

3.2 Identification

Traditionally, project studies have been more concerned with methods and success criteria (Belassi & Tukel, 1996; Cooke-Davies, 2002; Lee-Kelley & Sankey, 2008) than with human experiences, agency, or social relations, even though studies have emphasized collaboration as central for performance (Chiocchio, Forgues, Paradis, & Iordanova, 2011; T. Williams, 2016). Furthermore, studies have also suggested that the virtualness of collaborations in practice challenges the actors' relation building (Denstadli et al., 2011; Elsbach et al., 2010) and that inter-organizational settings produce an ambiguity in terms of identification (Ellis & Ybema, 2010). Considering that projects are increasingly global, multicultural, and cross-organizational, there is thus evidently reason and a need to focus on the social aspects of projects. This would be especially relevant to examine from a practice perspective by exploring the project actors' situated constructions of relations and identifications.

The following section will review literature on the concept of identification in order to understand how identification is conceptualized. The section covers not only identification-focused studies but also other studies that have produced findings and used concepts that appear to be relevant when studying identification. Finally, it will be considered how identification can be used and conceptualized in this particular study.

3.2.1 Identification as belonging

In general, identification is often defined as a person's perception or sense of belonging to an organization (Bartel, 2001; Huemer et al., 2004). Within organizational research as well as other research areas such as psychology, identification is a commonly used concept (Bartel, 2001; Borgen, 2001; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994; Ellemers, van Knippenberg, De Vries, & Wilke, 1988; Ellis & Ybema, 2010; G. H. Han & Harms, 2010; Ho, Tsung-Hsien, & Li, 2012; Huemer et al., 2004; Voci, 2006), and studies have shown the positive impact that organizational or group identifications have on cooperation, communication, work

effort, and knowledge sharing (Bartel, 2001). There are several approaches to conceptualizing identification, but a dominant perspective is the social identity approach (Hornsey, 2008), which covers social identity theory and self-categorization theory (Hogg & Turner, 1985; Tajfel, 1978; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) and implies a focus on individuals' cognitive identification processes rather than, for instance, collectively achieved, performative identification processes.

In contrast to the multiple studies on identification found in organizational literature, in project studies identification is somewhat of a marginalized concept. In fact, studies on identification in teams are more often published in organizational journals (Fiol & O'Connor, 2005; Nocker, 2009; Sivunen, 2006) rather than project journals. Some of the few project studies that explore identification describe it as a *sense of belonging* and particularly explore the connection between identification and virtuality in project teams. Fiol and O'Connor (2005) define identification as 'a person's sense of belonging with a social category' (Fiol & O'Connor, 2005, p. 19) and conclude that identification with the team is especially important for virtual settings, stating that it 'promotes a sense of togetherness' that is 'based on members' perceptions of belonging' (Fiol & O'Connor, 2005, p. 19). Similarly, Sivunen (2006, p. 346) explore factors that seemingly enhance 'team members' identification with the team' and finds identification development in virtual teams to be more complex than in co-located teams, specifically pointing to the lack of physical proximity as a challenge.

Thus, within project studies, identification has in general been conceptualized in terms of individuals identifying *with* groups, thereby emphasizing individuals' identification processes as something that occurs within the individuals and as connected to outside entities.

Another perspective conceptualizes identification as a discursively produced and as constructing situated *spaces of belonging* (Nocker, 2009). Nocker found that belonging is 'inextricably tied to how individual team members construct self-understandings, identifications, and imagine their own social space' (2009, p. 150). Previous literature has also explored the connection between place and belonging, e.g. Fortier (1999) who points to collectives' ability to produce (or re-member) *terrains of belonging*. Problematizing previous research on identification, Nocker argues that this research stresses 'a dichotomous view of belonging or not-belonging (to the team)' (2009, p. 150) rather than focussing on belonging or identification as situated subjective perceptions. In that, Nocker aligns with project studies of identification in understanding identification as *individual* (retrospective) sensemaking of spaces of belonging, but develops the notion by understanding identification as situated, and implicitly changeable.

What is left unexplored is how *shared* spaces of identification/belonging are collectively constructed in situated practice. That is, rather than considering identification as an individual cognitive process, it would be interesting for project studies to examine how project actors collectively construct identifications in complex project settings and what implications identifications have on the collaboration and work in practice.

3.2.2 Identification and trust

In organizational literature, identification is strongly connected to trust and trust is in fact often conceptualized as *identification-based trust* (Borgen, 2001; G. H. Han & Harms, 2010; Ho et al., 2012; Jarvenpaa & Shaw, 1998; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998), meaning that identification with a social group or organization leads to trust. Identification-based trust is positioned as a type of trust that is time-dependent, as it requires the development of shared goals, norms, and values (Jarvenpaa & Shaw, 1998; Webster & Wong, 2008).

The concept of trust is rarely defined or problematized in project studies; one of the few notions of trust explicated in the literature is the concept of swift trust (Crisp & Jarvenpaa, 2013). Despite the general lack of definition, project studies often find trust between project team members to be central to performance and productivity (Crisp & Jarvenpaa, 2013; Henderson et al., 2016; Jarvenpaa & Tanriverdi, 2003; Sankowska & Söderlund, 2015; Webster & Wong, 2008).

Contrary to organizational studies, the project literature does not explicitly connect the concept of identification to trust; however, a number of studies seem to suggest that identification influences trust, albeit without explicitly drawing on the concept. Henderson et al. (2016) find that norm alignment and role clarity are necessary factors for trust development in global project teams and present the notion of 'perception of proximity (presence)' (p. 1726), which is found to positively impact relationships and trust in global teams. This notion of perception of proximity seems to imply that the actors have something to be proximate to, someone norms are shared with, and thus something or someone to identify with as proximate. Even though the study does not explicitly use the concept of identification, identification seems to be an implicit aspect: In order to align on norms, we need to have someone to share and align on them with, which suggests that there needs to be a collective that can be identified as relevant to share norms with. In that sense, it seems that identification with a team or as a team is necessary in order for norm development or alignment to be possible.

Kasper-Fuehrera and Ashkanasy (2001) explore trust in interorganizational virtual collaboration and identify several factors that seem to influence trust. One such factor is 'Common Business Understanding', which seems to connect to identification, as it is described as a 'transient understanding between network partners as to what they stand for, about the nature of the business transactions … and about the outcomes that they expect' (Kasper-Fuehrer & Ashkanasy, 2001, p. 244). This notion seems to imply that the actors need to identify as a collective ('network partners' that have something in common that they 'stand for') in order to produce this common understanding. Furthermore, the word 'transient', not further explained here, seems to imply that the identification as business partners (who need a common understanding) is not stable, but rather changeable. In that sense, although not mentioned explicitly, the study seems to suggest that

(transient) identification is important for developing trust between business partners, thus connecting trust and identification.

Despite these many indications of identification-based trust, only few project studies explicitly conceptualize trust as identification-based. Buvik and Rolfson (2015) address trust on a team level of analysis and show that identification impacts the development of shared trust. They further show that identification is positively influenced by positive prior ties (familiarity), in that it is strengthened by the development of shared practices, knowledge of each other's strengths and weaknesses, role clarification, and a common philosophy.

Common for these studies is that identification, either explicitly or implicitly, is positioned as important for the development of trust, which is emphasized as important for project success. However, the majority of these studies do not directly address identification, nor do they explore how identification is developed. Furthermore, as neither of these studies focus on interaction and practice, the mechanisms through which identification is produced and influence in project settings remain unclear.

3.2.3 Identification and boundaries

Other studies connect boundaries to identification, either directly or implicitly (Bartel, 2001; Huemer et al., 2004; Richter, West, Van Dick, & Dawson, 2006). In general, boundaries are treated as markings of the space that individuals or groups identify as within or outside, that is, an organizational boundary 'dictates who are (and who are not) members of the organization' (Huemer et al., 2004, p. 56). For interorganizational collaborations, organizational departments, teams, etc., this can clearly be consequential.

In the organizational literature, boundaries are often treated as the 'coherent and object-like contours of an organization that manage the complexities between the organization and its context' (Karrbom Gustavsson & Gohary, 2012, p. 367), whereas boundaries in other perspectives are addressed as more or less fluid (Ellis & Ybema, 2010), as becoming rather than being (Huemer et al., 2004). As will become clear from the following section, the understanding of boundaries matters greatly for the conceptualization of identification in studies that connect the two.

A number of studies have conceptualized boundaries and identifications as *fluid* and changeable, finding that this is necessary to manage the ambiguousness of cross-boundary collaborations in practice. Ellis and Ybema (2010) conceptualize identification in terms of *boundary work*, understood as the work performed by *liminal* persons to manage identifications across organizational boundaries. They conclude that:

> liminal individuals do not understand themselves in terms of clear and unambiguous boundaries between 'us' and 'them', but instead are inclined to 'resolve' the ambiguities of their in-between position by alternately widening and contracting the circle of identification. (Ellis & Ybema, 2010, p. 299)

Thus, identification is not treated as a question of permanent inclusion or exclusion but is addressed from a processual perspective where shifting identifications are produced as necessary to manage the ambiguousness of 'belonging' in interorganizational contexts. Similarly, Ratcheva (2009) focuses on the ambiguousness project boundaries that are continuously 'opening' and 'extending' due to the necessary continuous inclusion of different specialized professionals to perform the project work. Ratcheva (2009) conceptualizes organizational boundaries as fluid and stresses a need to move research beyond a dichotomous concept of boundaries.

In other studies, boundaries are seen as *fixed* and stable rather than flexible. Bosch-Sijtsema and Henriksson's (2014) explore cross-boundary knowledge management and conclude that *boundary spanning* is necessary in order to integrate information and ensure progression of the project in interorganizational collaborations. Boundary spanning is a concept also used in a range of other studies (e.g. Ellis & Ybema, 2010) and is understood as the practice of working across or spanning organizational boundaries, and by 'supplying information from internal and external sources' the so-called the boundary spanner 'enables a quicker and more direct form of communication' (Bosch-Sijtsema & Henriksson, 2014, p. 1434), which positively influences collaboration and team efficiency. Thus, rather than talking about the 'opening' of boundaries as Ratcheva (2009) does, boundaries are framed as fixed but can be spanned by boundary spanners, in practice often the project managers. The concept of boundary spanning and in particular the emphasis on an individual as the boundary spanner seem to imply that some individuals in interorganizational collaborations are expected to manage a somewhat ambiguous position and possibly produce identifications with more than one group and help integrate or ensure the flow of knowledge or practices between the two (or more) groups. In contrast to Ellis and Ybema (2010), who found that these boundary spanners subsequently produced fluid identifications, Bosch-Sijtsema and Henriksson (2014) do not explicitly consider the implications that boundary spanning has on identification processes but rather demonstrate a dichotomous conceptualization of boundaries.

In other studies, which attend to temporary, liminal work settings, boundaries and identification are also connected and central. Although these studies do not directly focus on projects, several of them are of relevance, as they explore work settings that, similar to projects, are temporary and involve liminal, transitory positions. Garsten (1999) explores transient and liminal positions in her study of temporary workers. Garsten points to temporary workers as liminal persons who evoke organizational categories and boundaries through their 'entering and leaving' as well as their ambiguous role in the everyday of the organization, they are 'betwixt and between' organizations (1999, p. 603). She suggests that the ambiguousness of the liminal role can be difficult to make sense of, for both the liminal person and others inside the organization, exactly because these individuals are simultaneously insiders and outsiders. Thus, liminal positions make it challenging for actors to produce a sense of togetherness (Garsten, 1999), which seems to point to identification as both ambiguous and changeable. In a related study, Czarniawska and

Mazza (2003) noted that for liminal individuals, the organization becomes a liminal space, whereas for other members of the organization it is instead a 'non-liminal place, a place of stable identities and everyday work' (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003, p. 273), showing that the crossing of boundaries makes questions of identification relevant.

Similarly, other studies have demonstrated the complexities of identification processes of working across or being in a position between boundaries. In a series of papers, Söderlund and Borg (2013, 2015a, 2015b) addressed the identification challenges and practices of mobile project workers working across boundaries. They conceptualize the practice of managing ambiguous identifications in terms of competences, suggesting that liminal, temporary workers develop *liminal competences* (Borg & Söderlund, 2015b) in order 'to deal with flexible and transient work conditions' (Borg & Söderlund, 2015a, p. 261). They suggest that these liminal workers embrace 'the role as inside-outsider' (Borg & Söderlund, 2015b, p. 188) and manage the ambiguity by shifting between different identifications; that is, they are 'able to shift between belonging and not belonging to different contexts, such as the project, the client and the consultancy' (Borg & Söderlund, 2015b, p. 178). These studies show the clear connection between the concepts of boundaries and identification and implicitly emphasize identification as changeable.

Common for these studies is the understanding that boundaries matter in relation to identification. Several of the studies above are concerned with constructions and crossings of boundaries, and in the studies boundaries are conceptualized as fixed and as spaces to belong within or outside. Thus, most of the studies suggest a binary conceptualization of identification (belonging or not belonging) where the spaces of belonging are seemingly directly associated with organizational boundaries. In contrast, some studies point to identifications as well as boundaries as being fluidly constructed, as flexible rather than fixed. Finally, rather than discussing the nature of boundaries as such, some studies examine liminal aspects, treating the position across and between boundaries as particularly ambiguous for these liminal actors. Thus, although there are similarities here, the conceptualizations of identification and boundaries differ, and we have yet to explore how boundaries and identification are connected in practice. Thus, it seems relevant to further explore these matters from a practice perspective and attend to situated constructions of identifications in cross-boundary situations.

3.2.4 In the context of this study

The previous literature suggests different conceptualizations of identification, and different streams of research connect it to other different concepts. In this section, the ways in which these previous studies are of importance to this study will be considered.

As shown in the above review, identification is often conceptualized in dichotomous terms (as belonging or not), as opposed to being conceptualized in terms of fluidity or multiplicity. Further, these aspects are for the most part explored on an individual level of analysis.

Particularly, in many of the above-mentioned studies that focus on trust, identification is theorized as 'identifying *with* something', and the studies find that aspects, such as familiarity or proximity, positively influence identification development. In these studies, identification is thus not necessarily understood as a situated, continuous process.

Identification-based trust is positioned as a type of trust that requires time to develop (Jarvenpaa & Shaw, 1998; Webster & Wong, 2008), and it involves familiarity with or proximity to 'something'. However, if identification is necessary for trust and both take time to develop, how can it be that other studies find that, for instance, liminal persons such as temporary workers or project team members produce and navigate between different identifications? These studies suggest that identification is not a question of 'identifying or not' and that actors can in fact shift between spaces of belonging. Furthermore, other studies seem to suggest that trust can in fact be developed due to factors such as transient 'common business understandings', thus due to matters that are not necessarily developed over time but that connect to situated identifications (i.e. identifications as a team or collective here and now).

Looking across the studies on identification and discrepancies on the concept, it seems highly relevant to further empirically explore identification within interorganizational, virtual projects and subsequently consider how some of the above-mentioned findings and concepts can be elaborated on or refined.

As is evident from the review, there are several matters that remain unexplored. The studies demonstrate that there *is* a connection between identification and trust and identification and boundaries; however, the mechanisms of how remain to be explored. Taking a practice-oriented approach on identification, rather than a cognitive one, it would be relevant to examine *how* identification is produced and how trust and boundaries are relevant in that process in practice.

This study is informed by ethnomethodology and approaches identification and spaces of belonging as situated, collective accomplishments, rather than pre-given states or as a result of individual sensemaking. Spaces of belonging is here another way to address identifications, in particularly a way to frame the 'shared' identifications and a way to connect to thoughts on space and materiality. Similarly, the study will not consider organizational boundaries as necessarily relevant for constructions of identification but will rather attend to the ways in which actors themselves make boundaries relevant and construct these in specific ways, making these visible to actors and observers as such. In this study, identification is addressed analytically by examining the actors' situated interactions and their production of categorical order; that is, as category memberships are constructed and negotiated by actors, these can be considered as situated constructions of identifications and as producing specific (collective) spaces of belonging. In particular, the analysis will attend to matters such as displays of knowledge as predicators of categories and collections, explicit

categorizations, and shifts in these categorizations. This perspective allows for the examination of (fluid) identifications from a member's perspective and attentiveness to the complex contingencies of the local situations.

Exploring how identification is produced and how it relates to productive collaboration will help us not only understand that correlation in more detail but also understand what positively influences teams' collaborations.

4 Analytical Methods

This chapter will describe the analytical methods of this study: conversation analysis and membership categorization analysis. First, the shared origins and compatibility of the methods will be outlined. Following this, central aspects of the methods will be described and implications for the analytical process will consequently be considered.

4.1 EMCA

Conversation analysis (CA) and membership categorization analysis (MCA) are methods both developed from the work of Sacks (1995). As a student and later colleague of Garfinkel's, Sacks' perspective and work was greatly influenced by ethnomethodology. Even though Sacks developed a more linguistic focus than Garfinkel, CA and MCA share ethnomethodology's fundamental interest in human interaction and the production of social order.

While Garfinkel had a pragmatic approach to analytical methods and a strong connection to sociology, Sacks' work lay the foundation for systematic and rigorous analytical methods that enable analysis of the details of social interactions. In his work, Sacks was also inspired by Goffman, the man behind the term the *interaction order* (Heritage & Clayman, 2010, p. 8). Goffman was a pioneer in terms of placing focus on interaction, and he concluded that 'the institution of interaction has an underlying structural order' (Heritage & Clayman, 2010, p. 9). Goffman was also interested in actors' motivations – a line of thought that Sacks did not follow in his own work, in which he instead focused on how actors made sense of and accomplished their everyday lives by attending to their interactions. Thus, contrary to other social science methods, CA and MCA, in line with ethnomethodology, take mundane activities seriously and look at the ordinary rather than the extraordinary.

CA and MCA are rooted in Sacks' pioneering 'Lectures on Conversation' (1995) and have developed into analytical methods and substantial bodies of knowledge (Stokoe, 2012). The methods attend to human interaction but with different foci: CA is especially attentive to the sequential ordering of interaction, while MCA is concerned with the categorical ordering of interaction. Due to the different foci, the two methods are distinct and can be used individually; however, because of their similar interest and shared foundation, they can also be used to complement each other analytically. In fact, due to the close relations between the two, some researchers advocate combining (or simply do combine) CA and MCA within an ethnomethodological framework and suggest that this be referred to as EMCA (Due & Bierring Lange, 2017; Stokoe, 2012). For an elaborate discussion of this, I refer to Stokoe (2012) and the subsequent responses to her paper

(Silverman, 2012). As mentioned initially, this study follows this practice of combining the analytical methods of CA and MCA within an ethnomethodological approach, and it can thus be considered an EMCA study.

Within organizational research, studies using CA and MCA have shown how organizational members interactionally perform management and leadership (Clifton, 2014, 2015; Holmes et al., 2007; Larsson & Lundholm, 2010, 2013; Nielsen, 2009; Schnurr & Zayts, 2011; Svennevig, 2011) and through interaction and specific verbal contributions negotiate and construct identities (Angouri & Marra, 2011). Likewise, studies have found that some types of actions are more relevant for or even expected by some institutional roles (Angouri & Marra, 2010; R. Barnes, 2007; Boden, 1994) and that actors draw on their epistemic authorities, rights, and responsibilities to perform actions and influence interactions (Phillip Glenn & LeBaron, 2011; Heritage & Raymond, 2005; Stevanovic & Svennevig, 2015). Studies such as these show the relevance of considering the micro level of interactions, both sequential and categorical, when exploring social phenomena in organizations.

In order to deploy the two analytical methods, I find it necessary to briefly outline CA and MCA. I will not explain all aspects, analytical details, or terms used within the methods but will provide an initial overview. As I deploy the methods, I will explain the terms in use, when relevant.

4.2 Conversation Analysis

Conversation analysis (CA) is an analytical method to study the order of interactions and how actors produce sensible, accountable actions through talk (Heritage & Clayman, 2010). From the 1960s, Sacks researched interaction and, in a series of lectures, presented his thoughts and findings about the accomplishment of interactional order. Together with Jefferson and Schegloff, Sacks developed these thoughts and the conversation analytical method (Heritage & Clayman, 2010), and these three are today considered the founders of CA.

Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson's studies have investigated the micro level of talk and have expanded understandings of the organization of talk by uncovering the turn-taking system and other fundamental mechanisms of talk (Sacks et al., 1974). The term *talk-in-interaction* is used to orient towards the fact that the object of study is not 'just' conversations, but rather the interaction as such. Over the years, CA has developed as an analytical method that offers a 'linguistic lens' to explore interaction, and CA studies have emphasized a need to explore the sequential unfolding of interaction as this is seen as the entry point to understanding social order as well as sensemaking (Schegloff, 1992; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973).

Scholars who use CA attempt to reveal what 'humans do' by analysing the 'linguistic mechanisms that are at work in talk-in-interaction' (Huisman, 2001, p. 69). CA is concerned with the *how* rather than the *why*,

and particularly with how accountable actions and interactional order is produced. To reveal this CA researchers need to:

> consistently and insistently asks a single question about any action (and indeed any component of any action): why that now? And in response to this question CA examines what the action does in relation to the preceding action(s), and what it projects about the succeeding action(s). (Heritage & Clayman, 2010)

The assumption is that speakers' contributions are both context-sensitive and context-renewing; an utterance can only be understood in light of its sequential context, that is, through the speaking turns that are not arbitrary but are sequentially organized (Heritage & Clayman, 2010; Nielsen & Nielsen, 2005). As Drew phrases it, a 'turn-at-talk is contingent in some fashion on the other' s prior turn, and sets up contingencies of its own for what comes next, for how the recipient will respond' (Drew, 2013, p. 131), in that turns-at-talk are 'context shaped and context renewing' (Heritage, 1984, p. 242). Thus, it is no coincidence that what appears in the speakers' turns and next-turns of a conversation, but rather it is closely coordinated and vital for situationally producing meaning. This is conceptualized as *next-turn proof procedure* (Sacks et al., 1974), which entails that 'the understanding of a prior turn of talk is displayed by another participant through a next turn' (Clifton, 2006, p. 207). Thus, it is by attending to the turn-by-turn unfolding of interactions that we as analysts are granted access to the members' understandings. As highlighted by Svennevig (2011, p. 21) 'the basis for interpreting the utterances is not the analyst's understanding of them, but the interlocutors' reactions in subsequent turns at talk, the so-called next-turn proof procedure'. Conversational analysts use analytical terms, such as *treating as* and *orienting towards*, as expressions for the observations of interlocutors' 'making sense of this as', available through analysis of action and next actions. Thus, to make one's utterances or actions understandable and sensible to others is both an accomplishment and a necessity for the interaction to continue.

CA scholars study the interactional order in *naturally occurring talk* (Watson, 1992). CA is meant to be applied to transcriptions of audio/video-recorded data, consisting of interactions that have occurred naturally in homes, organizations, schools, or other places where people interact. This type of qualitative data, Sacks argued, represents 'an infinitely richer resources for analysis than what can be invented or imagined' (Heritage & Clayman, 2010, p. 13) and cannot be contested with regard to 'realness'.

The CA method prescribes that the data is then transcribed down to every little detail, thereby making the micro-level of talk available for analysis. Psathas describes that the transcription process 'often reveals interactional phenomena that had been hitherto unnoticed' and that these emerge through 'repeated listening/viewing and transcribings' (Psathas, 1995, p. 46). These phenomena can then be 'tracked' across the corpus of data in an attempt to discover patterns. This 'involves moving back and forth between, on the one hand, the detailed examination of particular cases and, on the other, a more synoptic view of the collection' (Sidnell & Strivers, 2013, p. 77). Thus, researchers shift between looking at specific instances in

the data and systematically exploring the overall data corpus, finding that the discovered phenomena might be singular, but there may also be several instances, making it possible to construct a *collection* of examples, which can provide access to studying variations (for more on transcription, see section 5.3.4).

Another important element is that the analytical process ideally should be led by 'unmotivated looking' (Psathas, 1995, p. 45). That is, the CA scholar 'refuses to use available "theories" of human conduct to ground or organize its arguments' (ten Have, 1998, p. 26) but lets the data lead the way. However, also within (EM) CA studies, after the empirical phenomena has emerged the analyst may engage with both conversation analytical theory as well as, for instance, organizational theory, and some thereby move towards a more abductive approach; that is, the researcher looks for interesting empirical findings, discovers phenomena, and first *after* a thorough micro-analysis, examines it in a theoretical context. As noted by Svennevig (2001, p. 1) research in practice 'cannot be based on either pure deduction or pure induction. Central to any scientific process is the inferential step from some initial puzzling fact to some theoretical hypothesis which can explain it. This inferential process is called *abduction*'. Furthermore, Svennevig concludes that: 'abductory theory of science involves functional rather than causal explanations, such that behavior is *accounted for* rather than *predicted'* (2001, p. 21). Thus, existing theories can be used to present possible accounts for micro-analytical findings.

Similarly, Lynch (1999), reflecting on the inductive and somewhat objective nature of ethnomethodology and CA, notes that the main difficulty with what he calls 'ethnomethodological indifference' (which suggests a detachment and 'objective' lens rather than 'not carrying') is 'convincing sociologists that the questions and topics ethnomethodologists take up are worthy of attention' (p. 221), as this contrasts conventional approaches where the empirical material is analysed in the light of pre-produced hypotheses. In contrast, CA attempts 'to avoid premature and idealized theory construction in favor of the empirical identification of diverse structures of practices' (Heritage & Clayman, 2010, p. 14). Thus, the risks of analysts producing and extracting subconsciously motivated findings is actively sought to be reduced by the rigorous focus on findings grounded in data examples as well as the strict focus on what the actors themselves make relevant in situ.

CA as a discipline maintains the strong emphasis on interaction and social order, but the focus of studies deploying CA as a method is very varied. In particular, two areas within CA can be identified: '"pure" or "basic" and "applied" or "institutional" CA' (Stokoe, 2014, p. 263). Scholars who perform 'basic' CA research are concerned with linguistics, the mechanisms of talk and interactions, and perform detailed studies of matters such as turn design, adjacency pairs, repairs, preferences, etc. with the aim of uncovering the mechanisms of talk-in-interaction.

The other strand of research, *applied* or *institutional CA* (Antaki, 2011; Heritage & Clayman, 2010; Psathas, 1995), builds on the (linguistic) findings of basic CA research and uses these to produce insights about social phenomena. Often, 'applied scholars' use CA to explore social phenomena in institutional

settings, and in some cases they even produce recommendations for practitioners (Antaki, 2011). It is within this strand of CA that the present study is situated.

One of the most studied phenomenon within applied or institutional CA are *meetings* and the talk occurring before, during, and after meetings (Angouri & Marra, 2010; Asmuß & Svennevig, 2009; R. Barnes, 2007; Boden, 1994). Institutional interaction, such as in meetings, (for the most part) differs from other interactions by being asymmetrical and has special turn-taking systems, overall structure, sequential organization, turn design, lexical choices, and epistemological asymmetries (Heritage & Clayman, 2010). In organizations, the asymmetry is especially apparent in conversations where the parties have different professional or hierarchical levels. Boden, who coined the term 'business as talk', notes that 'Meetings are, by their very nature, talk.… But who talks when, to whom, and for how long is no casual matter' (1994, p. 82). Maybe all types of interactions, institutional or otherwise, will have some degree of asymmetry, since knowledge, experiences, etc. will always differ, but in institutional interactions the asymmetry is often directly related to the participants' institutional roles, which have been shown to influence the sequential organization and the participants' contributions (Angouri & Marra, 2011; Heritage & Clayman, 2010).

In recent years, an increasing number of scholars have started to include a *multimodal* aspect to the analysis of interaction, and it has in some ways formed a distinct strand of CA (or EMCA) research. This multimodal perspective was developed as scholars became able to video record, rather than 'just' audio record, naturally occurring interactions. By including the multimodal aspect, scholars are still able to attend to the sequential ordering of talk but are also able to include findings on how the interlocutor uses bodies, gestures, facial expressions, etc. as resources in their interaction. One of the pioneers in this particular area is Goodwin (1986, 1994, 2000), who was one of the first to produce fine-grained analyses of embodied actions, which he showed to be central for certain professional practices, an area that others have also contributed to since (Deppermann, 2013; Deppermann, Schmitt, & Mondada, 2010; Due & Bierring Lange, 2017; Phillip Glenn & LeBaron, 2011; Koschmann, Goodwin, LeBaron, & Feltovich, 2006; Koschmann, LeBaron, Goodwin, & Feltovich, 2011; Mondada, 2007a, 2016). The multimodal perspective allows for a 'comprehensive understanding of human interaction' (Deppermann, 2013, p. 2).

A multimodal approach allows us to, in greater detail, study 'what humans do' and how they do it and multimodal studies are thus of interest for both basic and applied CA research. In the present study, I apply a multimodal lens whenever possible and relevant. The multimodal aspect of interactions is not the primary analytical focus, but the analyses do consider how talk and bodies 'work together' in the interaction.

Finally, I want to note that although CA can produce exceptionally rich findings, it is also relevant in this study to draw on interviews and observations. Analyses of these empirical materials are both used to place the micro-analytical findings in *context* but also to raise questions that allow for a deeper understanding of the projects and project actors that constitute the empirical setting. This practice is not common in CA studies, although many studies do include observational information to some extent. However, as this is an

EMCA study, and not 'solely' a CA study, the practice seems relevant, since studies drawing on ethnomethodology and MCA often include more context than 'pure' CA studies. Richards (2011, p. 203) notes that the 'methodological purity of CA demands a separation of proximal and distal that limits its explanatory breadth'; thus, although the method enables strong empirical findings, I think it relevant to also include situational context (to some extent) to enhance the explanatory relevance.

4.3 Membership Categorization Analysis

Membership categorization analysis (MCA) is a method to identify what Sacks called *membership categories*, *membership category collections,* and *category-bound activities* (1989, 1995). Sacks (1995) presented his original thoughts on membership categories in his lectures and demonstrated 'the apparatus' that we as humans use to categorize each other; that is, the membership categorization practices that enable us to make sense of and produce social order. MCA can be used in combination with CA, as it supplements analysis of sequential organization with the uncovering of categorical organization and the ways in which 'participants invoke and orient to more explicit features of the social order' (Richards, 2011, p. 203). In terms of the number of publications, MCA is the 'underdog' when compared to CA, but analytically the two complement each other.

Membership categories refer to a wide range of more or less situational social categories, such as woman, mother, police officer, yoga enthusiast, etc. Some categories are *public* at all times, such as gender and approximate age, while other categories only become observable to others when referred to or performed through utterances or so-called *category-bound actions* (Sacks, 1995). Categorization is an important aspect of producing meaning *during* interactions, not retrospectively. Categories can be organized into *collections*, 'they are set of categories that "go together"' (Schegloff, 2007, p. 467) and sometimes belong to more than one collection. Actors, referred to as *members* by Sacks, can be categorized or categorize themselves as members of these different categories – they are membership categories, invoked by members and not by analysts.

Sacks' most famous example, entitled 'The baby cried. The mommy picked it up' (1995, p. 252), demonstrates the coupling between categories and actions and explains the concept of *inference*. The coupling is based on common assumptions and norms. That is, when we hear the utterance (the baby cried, the mommy picked it up), we will most likely categorize the woman as the mother of that particular baby – her actions are in that sense category-bound actions, connected to the category 'mother'. To perform category-bound actions, meaning actions that are perceived as characteristic of a category can for the observer trigger the given membership category. This is also connected to Sacks' (1984) term *doing being ordinary*, which refers to the efforts of members to make their verbal and bodily contribution appear and be perceived as ordinary for that category within the situational and sequential context.

Sacks (1995) also introduced the term *membership categorization devices* (MCD), which 'refers to the apparatus through which categories are understood to "belong" to a collective category … via various rules of application' (Stokoe, 2012, p. 281). Or as Schegloff (2007, p. 467) phrases it: 'A Membership Categorization Device is composed of two parts – first, one or more collection(s) of categories, and, second, some rules of application'. Categorizations are thus determined empirically and according to the *rules of application* (Sacks, 1995). Sacks formulated several 'rules' to help explain the functioning of categorization: Firstly, the *economy rule*, which Schegloff explains as the fact that 'a single category term from any MCD can in principle do adequate reference. More can be used … but, in principle, one term can do adequate reference' (2007, p. 471). Secondly, the *consistency rule* (Sacks, 1995), which states that when a person is categorized as part of a category, then others who live up to the same characteristics can also be categorized as such. Also, the categories are 'protected against induction' (Schegloff, 2007, p. 471), which means that if a perceived member of a category breaks with what is considered 'known' about that particular category of members, then that person should be seen as an exception, and the actions of that person do not alter the perception of the category. In explaining the mechanisms of categorizations, Sacks refers to what he calls the *hearer's maxim* (1995). The hearer's maxim means that if you (in your capacity as a member or observer) hear something as part of a category or collection, you can also understand it as part of that category or collection.

Categorizations can be both accomplished explicitly or implicitly through 'activities, attributes, rights, responsibilities or knowledge-claims' (Whittle et al., 2014, p. 379) that are considered as being associated with specific categories. These are referred to as category *predicates* (Whittle et al., 2014). Predicates are conventionally anticipated features (Stephen Hester & Eglin, 1997), but they should not be understood as fixed; rather, they should be understood as performed and should be 'examined for what they practically achieve' (Whittle et al., 2014, p. 379) in the specific situations. As Hester and Eglin (1997, p. 22) note, categories are 'indexical expressions and their sense therefore *locally* and *temporally* contingent'.

Another important aspect to address here is *membership knowledge,* in that displays of specific knowledge can, similar to the category-bound actions, be seen as demonstrations of or infer membership of specific categories (and as producing these categories in situ). Membership knowledge is knowledge that is associated with and treated as common sense by members of specific categories; that is, it is qua situated displays of specific knowledge (or actions) and orientations towards this knowledge as relevant for and associated with the category, that membership knowledge can understood as such. Thus, the notion of membership knowledge can be seen as closely coupled to Garfinkel's notion of taken-for-granted knowledge. Members' knowledge is to be treated as locally produced as such and as context-bound; as Hester and Eglin (1997, p. 17) note, the '*use* of knowledge is always *situated*'.

Furthermore, membership categories are *inference rich* (Sacks, 1995; Schegloff, 2007), which means that they infer specific characteristics and membership knowledge, etc. about particular categories and that

members, by displaying this knowledge, characteristics, etc., can be categorized as members of that category. Schegloff explain the inference richness of categories in the following way:

> They are the store house and the filing system for the common-sense knowledge that ordinary people – that means ALL people in their capacity as ordinary people – have about what people are like, how they behave, etc. This knowledge is stored and accessed by reference to categories of member/person. (Schegloff, 2007)

Finally, although MCA is seemingly straightforward, there are some practical challenges with regard to analysis. Taking the hearer's maxim, for instance, if a category can be heard as part of two or more collections at the same time, how do I know which collection they refer to? And how can I, as an analyst, be sure that when I hear a category as part of a collection, is not my analyst's categorization, due to my knowledge and research interest, rather than the members own categorizations? In my opinion, the answer is that one can never be completely sure and that there will always be some degree of interpretation. However, it is here very relevant to apply the analytical concept of *next-turn proof procedure* to the interaction (Sacks et al., 1974): By attending to actions and next actions, turn by turn, we can examine whether our initial categorizations are reasonable. As Hester and Eglin (1997, p. 2) state: 'the production of particular types of sequential items is informed by an orientation towards the membership categories of the speaker, just as these items contribute to the categorization of the speaker'. Thus, by combining CA and MCA, it becomes possible to attend to the sequential and categorical ordering of the interactions.

In sum, the analyses will draw on both CA and MCA to study meeting interactions in project teams. More specifically, the analyses will attend to the sequential ordering of the interactions by focusing primarily on turn-taking, patterns of actions, as well as multimodal aspects. Moreover, the analysis will examine the categorical ordering by primarily exploring displays of taken-for-granted and membership knowledge as well as categorical inferences, and of course how the categorical and sequential order influence one another in situ. Using these primary analytical devices will enable the exploration of how actors collectively produce accountable actions, mutual intelligibility, and order in the local situation.

5 Research Design and Data Collection

This chapter describes the research design and data collection process of this study. First, the company that constitutes the empirical setting will be described. Second, the research design and data collection method will be explained and reflections on the process will be described. The next section will describe the process of recording the meetings in more detail and outline the different types of meeting that were recorded. Hereafter, a section will consider the transcription process as well as reflections on confidentiality. Finally, the chapter will describe the analytical processes of the initial analyses of interviews and observations as well as the three analytical chapters.

5.1 The Empirical Setting

The empirical material for this study was collected within Maersk Line IT (MLIT), the industrial partner in this PhD project. As part of the industrial PhD study, I was simultaneously employed by and researching within the company, and the partnership provided access and opportunity to collect empirical material within the organization.

In the following section, I will describe the empirical field that the company constituted, describing the organization in terms of locations, organizational purpose, and position in the overall organizational group. Furthermore, I will explain the organization of projects within the company as well as the project methodology in use. The intent is not to describe the company in full but rather to provide a fundamental understanding of the setting and type of organization. Since the data collection, the organization of MLIT has changed to some extent,[2] and at the end of this dissertation I will consider these changes in light of the analytical findings (section 9.7).

MLIT is a suborganization within Maersk Line, the largest shipping company worldwide. Maersk Line is one of the central business units of the A.P. Moller–Maersk Group (Maersk), a Danish-founded business conglomerate with activities in the transport and logistics sectors. The organization is head-quartered in Copenhagen, Denmark, but (currently) has more than 88,000 employees in offices in over 130 countries ("Maersk," 2018). Maersk Line itself has more than 33,000 employees and 374 offices worldwide[3].

[2] One of the more substantial changes took place in 2016 when Maersk decided to split the group into two divisions: Transport and Logistics (T&L) and Energy. With this change, the name of Maersk Line IT changed to T&L IT. However, as the data was collected when the organization was named MLIT, I will refer it using this name.
[3] Information from internal Maersk Line IT documents

At the time of data collection, MLIT had main offices in Copenhagen, Denmark, in London and Maidenhead in the UK, and in Charlotte in North Carolina, USA, as well as employees in a range of other countries. Today, MLIT still has the same offices in Denmark and the USA, but it has reduced the number of UK-based offices to one and has also opened new offices in India.

MLIT is the 'IT organization' within Maersk Line and develops all the required IT systems. The IT systems developed and delivered 'cover' areas from logistics, online booking systems, and container tracking to invoicing and data processing, etc. MLIT and the work being performed in this organization is thus extremely important for the daily operations of the shipping company as well as its further development.

When I began the data collection, Maersk Line and subsequently MLIT had recently started a transformation process to automate and digitalize much of the work that up until that point had been done manually, such as steps in the invoicing process and the transfer of data. An aim of the process was to 'simplify' the 'IT landscape' within the organization, since a complicated network of smaller and larger integrated systems, on which the operations of Maersk Line were highly dependent, had been developed over time. Due to the nature of the transformation, MLIT was tasked with more work than ever before, which resulted in a continuous growth in the number of projects and consequently an increase in the demand for project managers. This led the IT organization to focus on the 'professionalism' and abilities of these managers and on developing competences within the organization to run complex, global projects. Organizational activities and programmes were introduced to standardize the management of the many projects and to increase the success rate. It was in relation to this focus on project competences and global collaboration that this industrial PhD project was initiated.

MLIT is a project-based organization, and most of the primary work is done in and through projects (section 2.1.1). When the fieldwork took place, the company was divided into different departments (Operations, Finance, etc.), 'mirroring' the functions they supported within Maersk Line. The projects were thus 'anchored' in the different departments and hence had different purposes, stakeholders, content etc. However, many of the projects were also cross-functional and had (and still today have) strong ties to and dependencies on other projects. The projects' 'customers', primarily actors in Maersk Line, order and finance the projects. However, in order for MLIT to deliver the projects, the customers or 'business side', as it is referred to in MLIT, needs to be involved to ensure continuous alignment on end goals and changes.

Most of the projects within MLIT are organized into programmes; the programmes function as 'umbrellas' that unite projects that are interconnected, both in terms of systems and end goals. Other projects are 'stand-alone' projects – not because they are not interconnected to other projects, but in the sense that they are independently ordered.

At the time the observations were made, MLIT was 'rolling out' a new project model with the intent of standardizing the structure and management of projects. This model was developed internally but was highly inspired by the Prince2 project methodology (Bentley, 2002). The projects were organized in a so-called

waterfall structure (Griffin & Roldan, 2013) with the following phases: 1) starting up a project (goal-setting, initial scope, etc.), 2) initiating a project (gathering the team, etc.), 3) product delivery (in which the product is produced), and 4) closing a project (implementation and evaluation). Before moving from one phase to the next, the project's status and progress were evaluated. Today, the organization is moving towards a more agile structure.[4]

At the time of data collection, there were no specifications for the composition of a standard project team.

Depending on the projects, the project teams differed in size, nationalities, roles, distribution across locations, and prior experience and can be either long- or short-term. Usually, the project teams in MLIT as a minimum consisted of a project manager, a business analyst, perhaps a solution architect, and a project coordinator, and perhaps also a test manager and/or some developers. Not all roles are relevant in all projects, although all projects have project managers, and some projects use internal developers, whereas others use only external vendors for development activities.

The project teams in MLIT are rarely co-located but are instead often distributed across two or more locations. It is uncommon that project team members are located 'alone' at a location (i.e. without anyone else from their team), however it does happen. This globally distributed setup has consequences for how the teams communicate and collaborate, as they are reliant on virtual communication tools to perform their everyday work. Besides working virtually as an internal team, the projects are also (for the most part) being executed in collaboration with different external vendors or with the Global Service Centres (GSCs), which are also part of the Group. Both the GSCs and many of the vendors are located in various locations in India (and a few in the Philippines and even fewer elsewhere in Asia). The projects teams are thus global and virtual and work across organizational boundaries. Initially, it was the complexity of these global, virtual teams that caught my interest and motivated the project.

Thus, MLIT provides a rich empirical setting with many possible challenges and dilemmas that one as a researcher could focus on. In my research, I have chosen to focus on complexity in project settings and how it manifests itself in different ways in and around the projects, particularly attending to the interactions of the central members of the projects.

Now, we move on from describing the company to explaining the research design and process.

[4] I want to note that, in both practice and academic literature, there is an ongoing discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of agile and waterfall methodologies. For more details, see Serrador and Pinto (2015).

5.2 Research Design and Process

This research project was initiated with an interest in global project settings, in leaders and team members' professional interactions, and with an idea that this study would focus on leadership in projects. However, as the data was examined, the focus shifted somewhat. The research setting, global projects, has remained the same, but the questions of inquiry and the phenomena that is the focus have developed since the study began. I find it necessary to note where this project began, since it had a significant impact on some of the initial methodological decisions.

Early on, I decided to pursue a mixed methods approach (Silverman, 2013) and to combine interviews with observations and recordings of meetings. The intention was that this would allow me to triangulate my empirical findings; the intent was to use the transcriptions of recordings as my primary data and draw on interviews and observations to contextualize and nuance the micro-findings. By using micro-analytical methods such as CA and MCA, I would be able to 'zoom in' on the micro level and investigate specific phenomena, and the observations and interviews would allow me to 'zoom out' and understand the situational interactions in context (Nicolini, 2009).

In Figure 2, the overall steps in the research process has been illustrated. The arrows underline the iterative process of working with the empirical material. The analytical process is described in section 5.4.

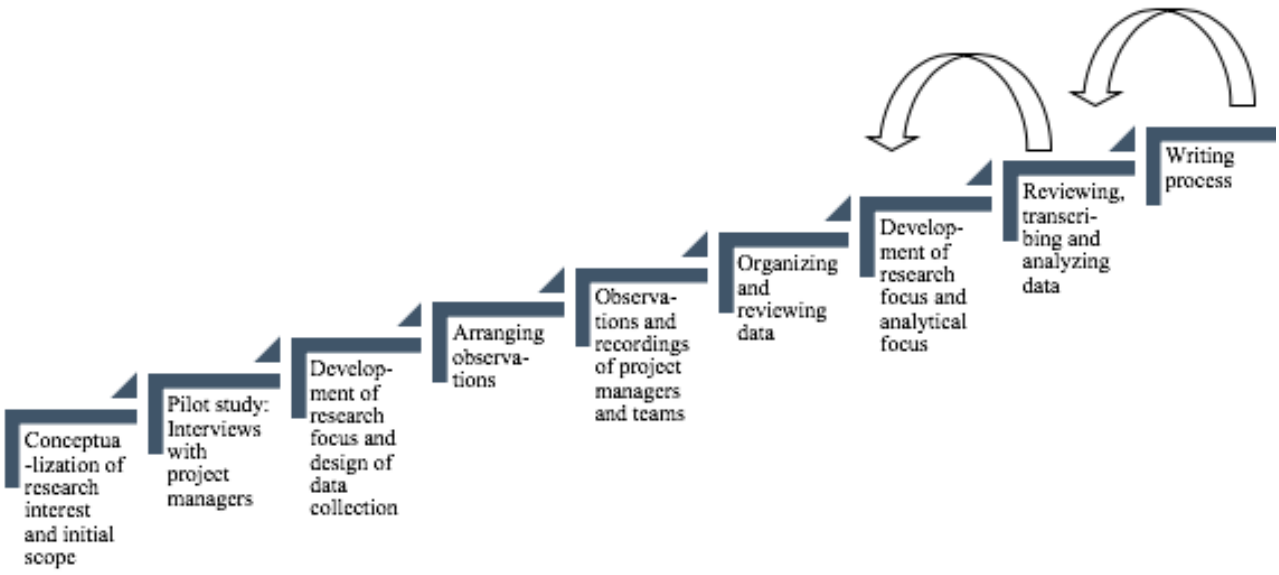


Figure 2. The research process

Throughout the process, I used my PhD plan as a tool to keep track of activities and inform MLIT stakeholders and supervisors. As one of my tools, I used a Gantt chart, illustrated below in Figure 3.

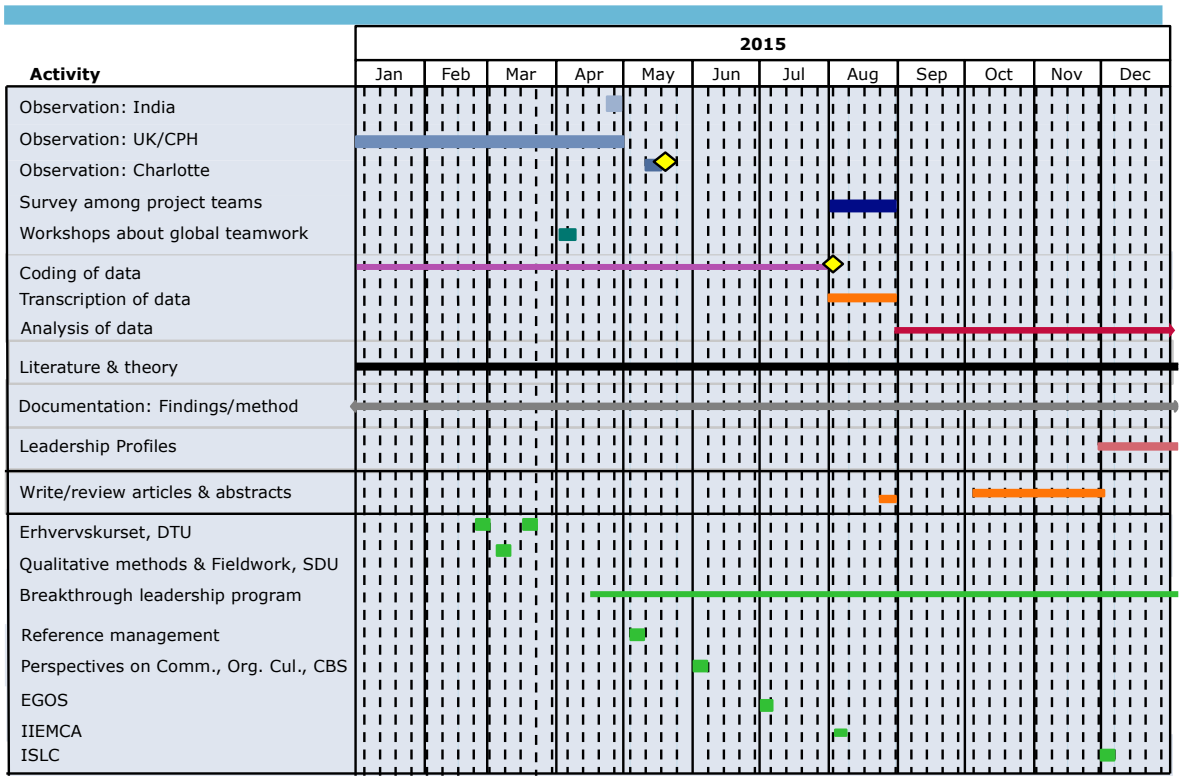


Figure 3. Gantt chart used in PhD project planning

That this study is an industrial PhD project has greatly impacted the design and execution of the project, as the project needed to balance the demands and needs of both academia and the company. Reflections on this will be outlined in the next section.

5.2.1 Managing contradicting contexts

The premises of qualitative research are interaction with the research area, new insights, thorough analyses, and critical discussion. In contrast, large, global organizations are driven by economic results, fast adaptation, and quick execution based on trends and market analyses. The premise of the role of an industrial PhD student is to work in the intersection between practice and academia, as was made clear by the funding provider, The Innovation Fund Denmark, in the application and start-up process. As an industrial PhD student, my experiences confirmed this, as I found that the role requires one to (competently) navigate in both contexts and to manage (sometimes conflicting) expectations.

I became a PhD student relatively shortly after I finished my master's degree, and so the 'university world' was not as such new, however, I needed to find a *new* place in this world. In contrast, the organization and the world of business was completely new to me. As a 'newcomer' to both the organization and the professional world of academia, you are required to learn two new languages, cultures, and groups of people

simultaneously: the organizational language and practices and the practices and language of academia/the university. As I was 'most new' to the organizational context, I spent much time in the beginning of the project at the organization in order to establish a connection and sense of membership here. Later in the process, I shifted between the university and the organization, since at this point in time I needed to be integrated in both worlds. As the project moved towards the end phase, during which I spent much time writing, I was mainly at the university and less at the organization. Although the premise of the industrial PhD role is to balance practice and academia, for me it seems that the more I have developed as a member of one organization, the further I seem to get from the other – not in the sense that the academic findings are not applicable in practice, but rather that my way of thinking and personal interests are influenced.

From the beginning, the contradicting 'world views' of academia and practice had direct implications, in particular for how I planned and executed the study. Of course, it was necessary to design a realistic plan for the data collection, the analytical and writing processes, etc., but at the same time this plan had to be accepted by stakeholders within the organization. In an organizational context where the phrase 'change is the only constant'[5] is used regularly and where the focus is on quick execution and measurable results, you cannot satisfy stakeholders by promising results 'three years from now'. However, since a PhD project is neither quick nor necessarily measurable, I needed to find a way to ensure continued support for the project. In close collaboration with my company supervisor and manager at that time, I solved this by: 1) ensuring that my research area was connected to business areas of strategic focus at that time, and 2) by planning different ways in which I could continuously disseminate knowledge to the organization, thereby producing practical value. The latter aspect required continuous contact with organizational stakeholders about *how* my research findings (as they were being developed) could contribute to the organization. Thus, throughout the process, I regularly had to consider how my research findings could be transformed into business value, and I then disseminated this through workshops, presentations, reports, and other activities. This is of course the very challenge but also the benefit of collaboration between practice and research.

In the next section, we will move on to descriptions of the data collection process and methods.

5.3 Collecting the Data

In the following, I will outline the different phases of the data collection process and describe some of the reflection I had during the process.

[5] The origin of the phrase has been attributed the Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus ("Heraclitus," 2018); however, the phase is used regularly, today, in organizations and in literature (Martin, 2014).

5.3.1 Pilot study: Interviews with project managers

The initial interest in leadership in global projects motivated me to arrange a small pilot study (which was executed while I awaited the final approval and funding for the project). In the summer of 2014 (June–August), I interviewed 12 project managers within MLIT. Additionally, I interviewed a representative from HR, one from the team Workforce Governance, as well as an externally employed project manager working within MLIT at that time.

The reason for the interviews was to 1) gain insight into what the project managers' jobs entail, 2) get to know and network with the project managers in order to engage with them and ease the process of organizing observations later on, 3) understand what the project managers' perspectives were and what they find challenging, and 4) understand how they perceive matters such as project leadership, teamwork, and global, virtual collaboration. A fifth reason, not directly related to the results, was stakeholder management; my stakeholders within the organization were very interested in generating some sort of value rather quickly. Based on the interviews, I produced a 'baseline report' to the stakeholders, outlining the most central (for them) findings, such as perceived challenges, etc.

In the planning process, before I began the interviews, I estimated approximately 15 interviews with programme/project managers would be appropriate. However, I could of course not be sure how many would be needed before I learned what I got from the interviews. So, I decided to organize the first interviews and then review the situation along the way. After 8–10 1-hour interviews, the answers began to seem quite similar, and just from memory I knew there would be patterns. I decided to conclude after 12 interviews. This number represents approximately 28% of all project/programme managers in MLIT in Copenhagen, and approximately 18% of all project managers in MLIT globally at that time.

The interviewed project managers were all located in Denmark. Table 1, below, is an overview of the project managers' gender as well their nationality. The representation of nationalities and gender very closely reflects the overall project manager group in MLIT at the time of the data collection.

	Male	**Female**
Danish	4	2
British	1	1
Indian	2	
Belgian	1	
Croatian		1

Table 1. Overview of interviewees' nationalities and genders

The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015) that I developed initially and reviewed throughout the interview process. The semi-structured approach creates a structure for the interviews and at the same time allows for flexibility with regard to the sequentially of themes and questions. The approach allowed me to ask about the same themes in each interview and at the same time pursue topics that the interviewees found particularly interesting.

The interview guide was divided into three sections: opening questions, six central themes, and, finally, some additional questions that were available to draw on if the conversation touched upon these themes or if there was time to spare. To get the interviewees 'warmed up', I began by asking them about their background, their tenure at MLIT, and their most recent project. In every interview, I covered the following central themes: leadership, required skills, virtual teamwork, cultural differences, the performance appraisal system, and the corporate culture. Other topics such as collaboration with vendors was brought up by some of the first informants, and it quickly became clear that this was of great relevance for the project managers, and so as a consequence I included questions about this in the following interviews.

During the interview process, I became aware of my (initial) limited knowledge about projects and project management in general but also specifically in this organization. The interviews proved to be a 'crash course' in understanding project management in the organization. As my understanding increased, I found myself moving from naïve questioning to more informed questions (Qu & Dumay, 2011; Rowley, 2012); however, I attempted to remain open to new understandings of phenomena. Consequently, in each interview I tried to find a balance between being an organizational insider and an 'naïve', interested researcher.

5.3.2 Observations in the field

The interviews provided access to the project managers' understandings and perceptions and informed me of challenges that the project managers experienced. Interviews are a valuable data source, but for the purpose of the overall study I wanted to get closer to the situated practice of project actors, rather than addressing subjective understandings. Thus, I decided to carry out observations of project managers and their teams and also record as many meetings as possible in order to capture the setting and the everyday work going on in project teams, as well as get access to the micro level of interactions in project meetings.

5.3.2.1 *Observational method*

Observations, and especially participant observations, are central methods within anthropology and ethnography (Hammersly & Atkinson, 2007; Spradley, 1980). Participant observations can entail the researcher living or working together with the subjects to gain insider knowledge and understanding of, for example, how practices work and why rituals are important. In a sense, this research project could be

considered to be one long ethnographic observation where I continuously learnt about the organizational context and functioned as a reflexive insider (Greene, 2014), or, if I had been more involved in the ongoing work, a reflective practitioner (Schön, 1983). Today, observational methods are being used in many areas of research; for instance, it is not uncommon within organizational studies to collect observational data and use field notes as empirical material (Hammersly & Atkinson, 2007), often in combination with other sources of material (e.g. Pentland & Rueter, 1994).

I decided to use shadowing as my observational method (Czarniawska, 2007; McDonald, 2005). The method does not claim to represent the insiders perspective, as it 'does not rely on an individual's account of their role in an organization' but rather provides access to 'the sort of first-hand, detailed data that gives the organizational researcher access to both the trivial or mundane and the difficult to articulate' (McDonald, 2005, p. 457). The method requires an 'outsidedness', since this difference between insider and outsider is seen as a source of knowledge: 'observers and strangers can see different things than actors and natives can' (Czarniawska, 2007, p. 21).

The shadowing method can be executed in different ways, as suggested by McDonald (2005), and it is described by some (e.g. Czarniawska, 2007) as a method that is distinct from participant observations in that shadowing does not require 'simultaneous action and observation' (Czarniawska, 2007, p. 55). Furthermore, she notes that participantship would be impossible for most researchers due to the complex nature of the settings (Czarniawska, 2007). However, perhaps we need to think about observations as a continuum rather than as a dichtonomy (participating or not), as Spradley's (1980) also suggested with his categorization of five types of participant observations: nonparticipation, passive participation, moderate participation, active participation and complete participation.

One of the practical benefits of shadowing is that it allows the researcher to move with the observed persons and ask questions throughout the observations, 'which will prompt a running commentary from the person being shadowed' (McDonald, 2005, p. 456). This proved especially valuable in my fieldwork, as the observed moved frequently from office space to meeting rooms and back again and by asking questions I gained a greater understanding of what was going on situationally (reflections on my role as an insider-outsider and the impact of this are considered in 5.3.2.5).

During the observations, I noted what I saw, heard, and felt with regard to actions, activities, disturbances and orientations, as well as my immediate surroundings. Furthermore, I noted my own actions, reflections, and how I was treated by the people I observed. In some ways, it seems that an initial analysis begins when you take notes; by noting one thing and not something else, a selection process is started that impacts the subsequent analysis. This is very similar to the transcription process, as described by Hepburn and Bolden (2013), where an initial analysis of the empirical material begins. Similarly, as notes are written, thoughts about the ongoing activities, interactions etc. are usually included, and these notes can be seen as representing early analytical thoughts.

5.3.2.2 *Organizing the observations*

Before organizing the actual observations, I had to decide *who* I would observe and then get permission to observe them. Since I at this point in time was interested in how leadership was performed I chose to observe the project managers, because these are the teams' formal leaders. Additionally, the project managers also have primary contact with internal and external stakeholders, thereby allowing me access to observing these interactions as well. Finally, I needed a single point of focus rather than trying to capture a team throughout a day, which would be difficult as the teams were often distributed and/or participated in different meetings. Choosing the project managers gave me a consistent place to direct my attention.

In regard to organizing the observations, the first step was to identify the project managers within the organization and find out who would consent to being observed. First, using internal data (provided by the internal function Workforce Governance), I identified the people with the titles of project manager, senior project manager, and programme manager. I chose all three groups because the lines between the organizational levels was quite fluid at the time[6] and titles seemed more dependent on experience rather than the sort of project, programme, or team that the individual person was responsible for. The relations between the different institutional roles can be seen in Figure 4, below; the lines are not formalized, hierarchical lines but rather the 'reporting lines'.

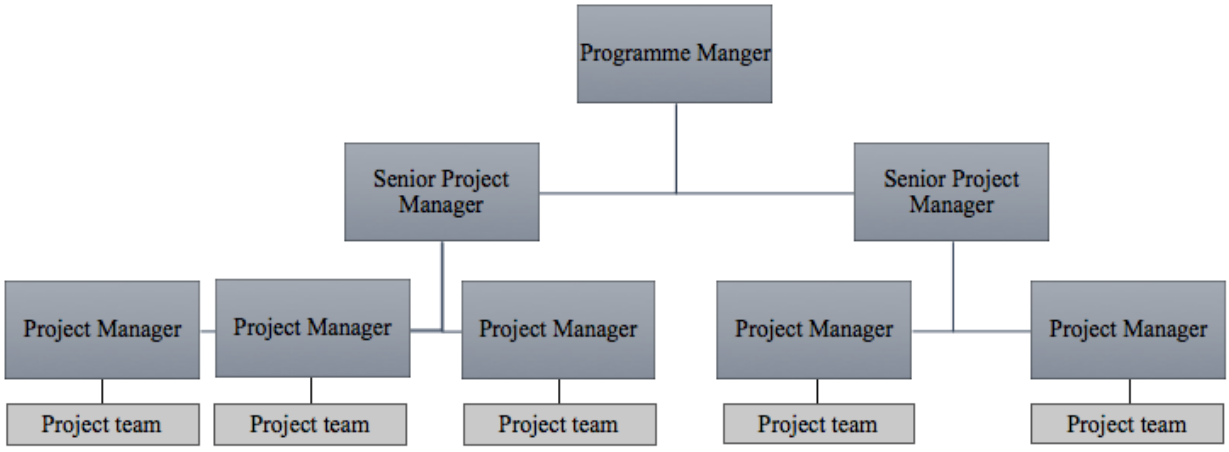


Figure 4. The reporting lines between programme managers, senior project managers, project managers, and project team members

[6] Since the data collection, the organization has reviewed all employees' titles and positions, and the roles have been standardized and streamlined, so that the distinction between levels is clearer.

In the rest of this dissertation, I will refer to the group as 'project managers', unless there is reason to specify the exact role.

As the organization is global, I also wanted to observe project managers in the different locations in order to capture differences and local contingencies. Furthermore, in organizing the observations, I strived to involve projects that had distance teams or a mix of local and distance teams in order to capture the global aspect. However, I realized that it was difficult to define what comprised a distance team in practice. Some of the project managers considered only MLIT internals (local and distance) as part of the team, whereas others included vendor teams, often located in India, as part of the overall team. So, asking them if they had a distance or a local team was interpreted in very different ways. Due to the explorative nature of this study, I did not know which constellations would be most relevant; therefore, I decided not to differentiate between the team types (i.e. whether the distance teams consisted of only locals or included vendors) at this point in time but rather let the analyses show if and in what ways the team structure makes a difference.

As I designed the data collection, I planned for flexibility; I knew the steps of the process and had clear goals with regard to the range and type of data I wanted, but I also went into the actual collection process with an open mind and a flexible calendar, which proved to be a good starting point. Throughout the collection process, I constantly had to adapt my plan and be flexible with regard to timing (e.g. because project managers suddenly cancelled or postponed observations due to travel). Also, despite my role as an insider in the organization, I still found it somewhat challenging to 'get access', as it sometimes proved difficult to get in contact with some project managers and have them agree to participate. Furthermore, in a few instances I did not choose the project managers myself, but since I generally had no or very little prior knowledge and only a little contact with the people I chose, I found that it did not make much of a difference.

Initially, I had to make a choice between longitudinal observations or shorter periodic observations, and I had to consider what fewer, longer observations would give me in terms of data versus what several shorter observations would provide. I decided to observe for a shorter period of time and in turn observe a greater number of teams and project managers. I chose this because I knew from the interviews that there was great differentiation between projects, and I was interested in capturing some of this. Also, I had to be pragmatic and reflect upon the organizational interest, which was somewhat in 'breadth' rather than 'depth', that is the organizational sponsors wanted to know about practices and challenges across projects, rather than in individual projects. I am certain that a longitudinal study of a few project managers and teams would also have provided very interesting data and that this approach would have given me a *very* in-depth understanding of the challenges and work life of the specific project managers and teams. However, at this early stage, I was interested in and wanted to explore the variety of projects within this empirical setting. Therefore, I chose to carry out shorter observations and aimed at shadowing between 10 and 20 project

managers. I did not decide on an exact number, as I first wanted to experience the observations. I carried out the first two observations in Copenhagen and aimed to observe these two project managers for 1–3 days; however, due to practical circumstances (sickness and a trip abroad), these two observations were only for one day each. This was not long, but it gave me a sense of what I could get out of the observations, and I experienced how much data I got with just one day. Based on this, I decided to try out 2-day observations for the next observations. Two days seemed like a good length for several reasons: Firstly, it gave people a chance to get to know me and possibly feel a little more relaxed and familiar with the 'procedure' the second day. Secondly, it gave me an impression of the continuity of activities, and it turned out that on the second day I always had a better understanding of the project purpose, activities, and context, as well as knowledge about the people involved with the project. Also, the shortness of time reduced the risk of people getting tired of having a shadow (Czarniawska, 2007) and increased the chance of them including me in their meetings, etc., as I 'only' had little time 'to get what I needed' as one of the project managers phrased it.

An unintended but fortunate benefit of doing more and shorter observations was that I got to see several examples of how the projects were interdependent. In particular, when I shadowed project managers within the same department, I got to experience the project actors working across projects or sharing knowledge (e.g. in monthly department calls).

5.3.2.3 *Collection process and locations*

Due to the interest in the global collaboration (and initial interest in leadership) in these projects, I thought it relevant to include and observe project managers at all of the organization's primary locations. Retrospectively, the visits to the different locations allowed me to get a sense of the local context, working culture, and the practicalities that influence the project actors' everyday work.

I designed the data collection process to involve five different locations:

- Copenhagen, Denmark
- Charlotte, North Carolina, USA
- London, UK
- Maidenhead, UK
- Undefined location, India.

MLIT's primary locations are in Denmark, the UK, and the USA, and I carried out observations in MLIT offices in these locations. In India, MLIT did not at that time have any larger locations; instead, they had scattered expats stationed with other business units within the Maersk group. However, the majority of the project teams work closely with remote teams from either external vendors or internal service centres located

in India. I wanted to somehow include the Indian side, but was uncertain about how to go about this. An opportunity emerged when I became aware of a programme manager and his group of project managers who were going to Bangalore to visit a vendor, and they were kind enough to let me accompany them.

The data collection in all other locations than the observations in India followed the above-mentioned 2-day structure. Figure 5, below, presents the timing and location of the observations as well as the number of project managers observed.

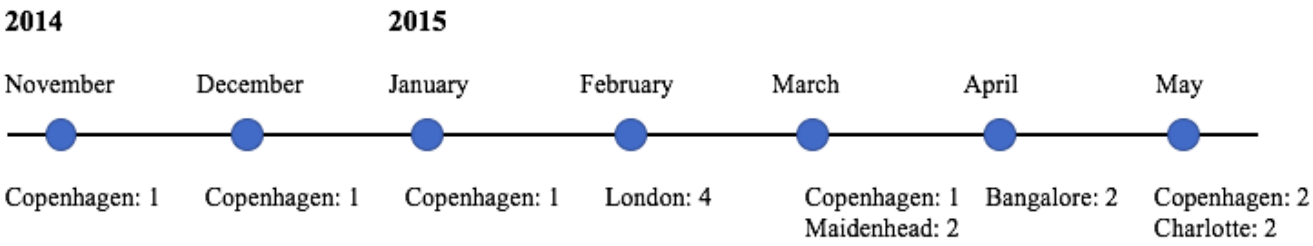


Figure 5. The timing and location of observations

Since MLIT is an international organization, employees have many different nationalities. The project teams were for the most part multinational and distributed across at least two locations. In Table 2, below, I have made an overview of the observed project managers' nationalities and the location of observation (unfortunately, I do not have an overview of the all the team members' nationalities).

	Copenhagen, DK	**London, UK**	**Maidenhead, UK**	**Charlotte, US**	**Bangalore, IN**
Danish	2				
British	2	2	2		2
Indian	1	1			
Belgian	1				
American				2	

Table 2. Overview of the locations of observation and the project managers' nationalities

5.3.2.4 *The participants' orientations*

Most of the project managers who were interviewed or observed seemed quite happy to participate in the research, some even seemed a little flattered, while others seemed puzzled by the fact that I wanted to interview or shadow them. Some project teams and managers even joked about the 'PhD student stalker'.

When I started collecting data, I feared that the participants thought that my intention was to evaluate them and their performance. Consequently, I stressed to the participants that my research was not directed or monitored by anyone, but I was also open about the fact that the organization obviously had an interest in the results and that the individual participants therefore would remain anonymous. Despite this, I experienced that several of the people I observed tried to present themselves in a positive light and point to things that might make me perceive them in certain ways. This was especially evident in the interviews, where the project managers primarily told 'success stories' about their own practices, whereas problems were often attributed others or the organization in general.

During the observations, I often experienced that the project managers almost apologized if their work mostly consisted of them sitting by their computer on that particular day. They wanted to give me something 'good, and juicy'. However, as I also explained to them, that was not a problem, as it is all part of their job, and, furthermore, despite 'just working by their pc' they still had regular interactions with other people and team members, either face to face or via ad hoc telephone calls.

Most of the project managers and teams I shadowed asked for some feedback from me. They were very interested in how I perceived their way of doing things and if they differed from other project managers/teams. After my first experience with this, I decided to tell them about matters that might have surprised me or my general impression of their working relationships, but I did not go into detail, as I had not yet had time to analyse.

5.3.2.5 *Insider-outsider role*

During this PhD project, I have slowly become an 'insider' of the organization – and I say 'insider' with caution, as I have not been deeply involved in the actual work taking place in the organization. Before I officially initiated the PhD project, I did work for a few months in the Strategy Team, but since then I have not been involved in the everyday work of the organization. However, as I am employed by the organization and thus have access to buildings, internal information, etc., I do consider myself an 'insider' and I am treated as such by others in the organization. Consequently, I needed to develop a way to critically reflect on my experiences within the company in order to avoid becoming 'too submerged' in the field but maintain a sort of 'outsider's' gaze, an important aspect when carrying out observations (Greene, 2014).

In general, I was inspired by the work of Schön (1983) and Lave and Wenger (1991). Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasized the concepts of *situated learning* and *peripheral participation*. Situated learning refers to

the understanding that 'learning is an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-in world' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 35), that it is as the practices unfold and are engaged in that learning is constituted, in my case by observing rather than participating. Peripheral participation follows the understanding of situated learning and concerns the process of 'newcomers' learning from 'old timers' (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and thereby moving towards becoming competent members of a *community of practice*. I draw on these concepts as I try to create reflection on and an awareness about my own learning process and about my (sort of) peripheral role – not in the sense that I move towards becoming a fully competent practitioner, but rather that I move towards greater understanding of the setting by engaging with the practitioners of the setting.

Likewise, I draw on Schön (1983), who presented the term *reflexive practitioner*, which is concerned with practitioners' reflection practices: Practitioners should reflect *in* action (meaning as it is being performed) and *on* action (retrospectively) with the aim of learning and developing practices (Schön, 1983). In my case, inspired by this concept, I wanted to develop a way that I could remain reflexive about the organization and the practices I observe and at the same time train a critically 'observational gaze' and reflective thinking. Subsequently, when I began working at Maersk, and thus before the actual data collection, I began to write weekly journals in which I noted what had happened in MLIT in that week, which events I had participated in, what I thought about these matters, what I found puzzling or strange, what could be done differently, etc. This practice really trained my observational and outsider's gaze and further developed my (at least in my mind) role as an 'insider-outsider'.

When I began the data collection process, I had to step out of the 'insider' role even further and attempt to view the setting as an outsider would. Of course, it is not possible to completely be an 'outsider' when you possess as much (tacit) knowledge as I had come to have. However, I did attempt to reflect on this tacit knowledge that I had accumulated and how it influenced what I saw and how I saw it, and thus I tried to position myself in this 'insider-outsider' position.

Usually, researchers enter a new setting when they carry out observations (or other qualitative fieldwork); however, in this situation, the setting was only partially new, and I had to step out of the somewhat 'insider' role and attempt to view the setting as an outsider would. I had a basic insight into the organization, was familiar with the physical surroundings of the office in Copenhagen, was accustomed with the values, culture, couture, and (some of the) lexis of the organization. However, I was not a competent practitioner and thus had little knowledge about projects within the organization, how they were organized or managed, the people working on the projects, the actual project work, etc. In a sense, I was an insider to the organizational setting, a peripheral participant in terms of work, and an outsider in the project settings.

Also, with regard to the locations where I collected data, they were all, with the exception of the Copenhagen office, unfamiliar to me (Maidenhead, London, Charlotte, and Bangalore), and so in these locations I was very much an outsider – both in terms of the project setting and the location.

However, despite trying to view the organization from the outside, my 'insider knowledge' also proved useful on several occasions. For instance, already on my first day of observations, the project manager asked the student assistant how a meeting with the 'P to P' team went, and if I had not been an organizational insider I would probably not have known that this referred to the 'P2P' (purchase to pay) team or what this particular team did. Furthermore, as I became more experienced and had carried out several observations, I had much more prior knowledge about practicalities such as project process steps, terminology, dependence between project, and names of different people, and generally I understood the organizational context better. The deeper understanding gave me the opportunity to ask the more contextualized and 'deep' questions, but I still attempted to remain open to new understandings of the more basic matters as well. I attempted to manage this by situationally reflecting on what was taking place in-the-moment and also noting any other reflections after the observations (Greene, 2014). I tried to be considerate of this challenge during the observations and to do my best to note as much as possible, asking both informed and 'naïve' questions.

Similarly, when I did the interviews, I initially asked many 'basic' questions about the structure of the project teams, who the vendors were, etc., but as I learned more, both through the interviews and my everyday presence in the organization, I needed to ask fewer of these question in order to understand the interviewees. Even though this seems to be a natural process in data collection, it may have resulted in less 'wonder' about certain phenomena, but on the other hand my insider knowledge also enabled me to ask more specific questions than I would otherwise have been able to.

Finally, my role as an insider changed after the data collection process. Stepping away from the organizational setting, engaging with data, and not being involved in the daily work or occurrences, I maintained an observational stance towards the organization; however, by engaging regularly with internals, I also maintained my role as 'insider', rather than becoming a complete 'outsider'. In that way, I tried to balance an 'insider-outsider' role.

We will now move on from the observations to describing the process of recording meetings, which took place during the observations, as well the outlining the specific features of meetings.

5.3.3 Meetings and recordings

I will start this section by giving a short introduction to the concept of organizational meetings and account for my focus on meetings. Afterwards, I will provide an overview of the meeting types that I have recorded, and, lastly, I will explain the process of recording and my reflections about this process.

5.3.3.1 *Meetings*

In a way, meetings are the very representation of organizations (Boden, 1994). It is often in meetings that important decisions are made or communicated, that teams interact and discuss their work, that plans and strategies are accomplished, etc. When we think of meetings in organizations, we often think of rooms dedicated to the purpose (e.g. tables with chairs around them, projectors on the wall), but organizational meetings can also be stand-up or ad hoc meetings, or have multiple other formats.

Boden, one of the pioneers within the study of organizational 'talk', has showed how the micro level of interactions, such as that taking place in meetings, are linked to the larger scale organizational settings. Boden defined meetings as:

> a planned gathering, whether internal or external to an organization, in which the participants have some perceived (if not guaranteed) role, have some forewarning (either longstanding or quite improvisational) of the event, which has itself some purpose or "reason," a time, place, and, in some general sense, an organizational function. (1994, p. 84)

Thus, there are different kinds of expectations and understandings connected to meetings, both in terms of teams' or individuals' perspectives as well as organizational purposes.

Meetings are institutional interactions, but they can be more or less formalized (Boden, 1994), which is observed by differences in the turn-taking practices. Meetings are recognizable as such by their sequential order and the situational and material context, but at the same time they can be very different in format and content. This is true of face-to-face meetings as well as ICT-mediated meetings, although there are significant differences between these meeting formats (Hassert, Nielsen, & Nielsen, 2016). In meetings, talking turns are often organized by the *chair* of the meeting (Angouri & Marra, 2010; Asmuß & Svennevig, 2009; Boden, 1994), and even though turns can also be more freely distributed, there is usually a more formal structure than in everyday talk. The chair can be, but is not necessarily, the formal leader of the people present at the meeting.

Meetings do not exist separately from the interactions between participants; rather, they are constructed and accomplished as meetings and as specific types of meetings *through* the participants' talk. Meetings can have an array of purposes, but as pointed out by Holmes and Stubbe (2003), it is typical that meetings centre on activities that are focused on the past (e.g. reporting), the present (e.g. problem-solving), or the future (e.g. planning). The interaction between meeting participants often stretches beyond the meeting itself, since pre-meeting talk (Mirivel & Tracy, 2005) and post-meeting talk (Asmuß & Svennevig, 2009) are common. These types of interactions are usually quite different from the meeting itself, as it is often here that private lives are discussed, gossip exchanged, or informal things coordinated, whereas professional talk characterizes the meeting itself.

In international companies such as the ones of this study, many meetings are mediated by ICT, either a type of video or telephone meeting. There are vast differences between being in a face-to-face meeting and an ICT meeting, since the communicative resources are much more limited in the ICT settings due to the technological constraints (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Depending on the meeting format, the participants have restricted access to each other's facial expressions, bodily orientation, and gestures (Hassert et al., 2016); these are the very communicative resources we often use in face-to-face interaction to subtly express understanding and organize the talk, for instance by selecting next-speakers (Mondada, 2007a, 2011).

5.3.3.2 *The different meetings*

The observed project managers participated in many different types of meetings with many different people. Some meetings are independent of the projects (e.g. departmental all-hands meetings or one-on-one meetings with employees), but many other meetings are highly dependent on project phases with regard to frequency, content, and participants.

The meetings observed and recorded are either local, virtual, or a hybrid of the two. In my data, I can identify four general types of meeting as well as several subtypes. These are outlined in Table 3, below.

General types	**Distinct types (incl. features)**		
Local: Face-to-face	Only local face-to-face participants. Either planned or ad hoc meetings. Can take place in meeting rooms, informal areas, or in the office space/by a desk.		
Hybrid: Face-to-face and virtual	Co-located group and individual participants calling via video or telephone.	Co-located participants calling another co-located group.	

Virtual: Calls	One-on-one telephone calls.	Telephone conferences: Participants call a conference system and enter through a conference code. Enables multi-party calls but has no extra functionalities.	WebEx: Online system that requires a host to arrange a meeting. Enables multi-party calls, screen sharing, and recordings. Provides a live-updated list of people in the meeting.
Virtual: Video	Video conferences: Video-enabled meetings, which allow the participants visual contact as well as screen sharing.		

Table 3. Overview of meeting types

Most of the observed and recorded meetings were hybrid, meaning both virtual and local at the same time, as at least a few of the participants would be sitting in a room together or in close proximity to each other. Before I began the data collection, I assumed that I would be recording face-to-face, telephone, and video meetings; however, in reality, I only got to record the first two types. During the observations, I only *once* experienced that the project manager participated in a video meeting. Instead, they primarily had telephone meetings (with people who were not present at their location). I was quite surprised by this, since I knew that, at the Copenhagen office at least, video equipment was available. However, as I travelled, I realized that video equipment was not as widely available at the other locations, and I also learnt that the vendors often did not have video equipment available (this has changed since the observations). Consequently, many of the project managers solved this practical problem by planning telephone meetings instead, thereby ensuring that they would be able to connect.[7] However, I experienced that this was only partially the reason why telephone meetings were so often used. Besides the fact that the telephone meetings were easy to set-up and use, they also seemed to be preferred by many of the project managers because the format allowed them to do other activities while participating in the meeting. In particular, if they were calling into the meeting from their desk, this setup allowed them to write emails, read and prepare documents

[7] Today, video meetings seem to be more widely used throughout the organization, since the organization has begun using Skype for Business rather than a variety of technologies as they previously did.

for other meetings, plan future meetings, etc. This kind of inattentive meeting participation was very common.

5.3.3.3 *Reflections on recording the meetings*

I wanted to record meetings, and not 'just' observe them, in order to capture data in which I could later explore actions and interactions as they unfolded. This type of data provides the opportunity to explore situated practices of project settings and draw on micro-analytical methods such as CA.

As a qualitative researcher looking at naturally occurring data, the 'dream scenario' is to get access to the 'uncontaminated' data (Silverman, 2013), meaning data where the setting and participants are not affected by the fact that they are being studied. This is referred to as *the observer's paradox* (Labov, 1972): The wish to observe people go about their normal lives as if they are not being observed. Gordon (2012) suggests that generally within research 'the presence of a recorder is seen as a limitation, as inhibiting the collection of "natural" speech' (p. 300). However, Gordon (20012) as well as others (e.g. Hazel, 2016) find that the recorder and orientations towards this are *actually* not a limitation but can instead be used by either participants or analysts as resources to analyse identities, transgressions or troubles in talk, etc.

In this study, I was initially concerned with the influence of the camera on the talk-in-interaction in the meetings and whether I should participate as an observer. Initially, I decided not to participate in the meetings, following the common understanding of the observer/recorder influencing the interaction (Gordon, 2012), my assumption being that by limiting the 'intruders' the interaction would be influenced less. However, my attempt to reduce possible influence quickly faced practical issues, since I soon realized that the project managers often participated in meetings all day (or for many at least 75% of their day), and if I did not participate in the meetings, I would simply have to 'wait around' for most of the day and get very limited observational data. Other problems were that the meetings often followed on from one another, making it difficult to differentiate between meetings afterwards and that, as meeting locations/rooms changed, it became challenging to record if I did not respond quickly to these changes. After the first few observations, in which I tested different approaches by recording and participating in some meetings and only recording others, I decided that for the rest of the data collection I would both attend meetings and record when possible.

With regard to influence on the interaction, Hazel (2016) finds that meeting participants publicly display *when* they orient towards the recorder/camera, arguing that this does not render 'the entire interaction as performed for "the benefit of the tape"' but rather that the 'recording instruments that have been introduced into the setting are utilized as resources to publicly demarcate between concurrently unfolding activities' (Hazel, 2016, p. 463). He argues that if the interaction was in fact performed 'for the recorder', the interaction taking place would not make much sense for the collective in situ. Instead, Hazel (2016) finds

that the actors use the recorder as a resource to display themselves as ‘knowledgeable members of a particular institutional community’ (p. 464) as well as ‘displaying to one another their understanding of the research aims, and their knowledge of how these kinds of data are constituted’ (p. 455).

Regarding my empirical material, it further seems relevant to consider that the influence of the recorder and my presence varied from face-to-face meetings (or hybrid meetings) and telephone meetings. In the latter, I was completely ignored in most of the meetings and the recorder (when these meetings were recorded) was invisible to the participants. The project managers usually announced my presence on the call, and during WebEx meetings my name was listed with the other participants’ on the screen. A few times, a participant asked me a question or two, but usually I was just a part of the group of passive participants, which was quite common in larger meetings. With regard to the face-to-face meetings, I was an obvious outsider of the project in those meetings, but it seemed that the actors were not particularly disturbed by my or the camera’s presence but in fact only oriented to ‘us’ at points in the conversation that they seemed to find particularly sensitive (e.g. in terms of relations or office politics) or at shifts in activities. Similarly, Mortensen and Hazel (2017) have concluded that ‘participants often glance at recording equipment at moments when there is an orientation to some form of transgression of normative appropriate conduct pertaining to the ongoing interaction’ (Mortensen & Hazel, 2017, p. 263). In that sense, the orientations towards me or the camera can be seen as indicators of talk that the actors consider to be ‘breaking the norm’ or ‘sensitive’.

In general, I think the fact that I was an insider to the organization and was a familiar face for many ‘demystified’ my presence and gave me legitimacy to be there, besides my research. After a few meetings with the same participants, it seemed as if they got used to my presence, although some still seemed puzzled by the fact that I found their interactions interesting.

Reflecting back on the process, I believe that I gained a great deal of valuable data from participating in the meetings and could contextualize what I observed in and outside the meetings. In that sense, being in the meetings allowed me to qualify the rest of my observations, since I could ask the project manager informed questions about what was going on, about the meeting participants, etc. This information may not otherwise have been available to me, simply because I would not know to ask.

With regard to the recordings, I also faced practical issues; in particular, recording the project managers’ telephone meetings proved difficult. Some of the meetings were hosted using an online system, WebEx, to which the participants call in and can share their screen. WebEx has a record function, which I unfortunately did not know about until halfway through my observations. The host of the meeting can record, and some of the project managers did record their WebEx’; however, it was very often not the project manager or a local team member who ‘hosted’ the call, but rather a remote participant.

Aside from WebEx calls, the project managers had ordinary telephone calls and conference calls, which could not be recorded by the call system. If the conference calls had been through Skype or similar

technologies, I could have captured sound and shared screens by recording the screen (using QuickTime). However, as the phone meetings/conference calls were via telephones, this was not possible.

Most of the time, the project managers had phone meetings by their computer at their desk. In these cases, I could not record the sound unless I stepped into another room and had the speaker on. I did do this a few times, but it had several disadvantages: First, I would occupy one of the limited numbers of meeting rooms, and, second, I would have to step away from the project manager I was shadowing. This would not have been a problem if they solely focused on the meeting and just participated, but that was rarely the case. Often, they would have numerous online chat conversations going on at the same time or write emails or talk with people coming by. Sometimes they would also leave the meeting without notice to call into another meeting, and thus I assessed that it would be best if I stayed close to the managers and take notes of meeting activities. Looking back, I might have opted to record more of these meetings, since the recordings came to be my primary analytical material.

One might ask why I did not record interactions outside the meeting room, as these are of course also relevant and interesting. This is an appropriate question with at least two central answers: First, there are practical limitations to recording; the equipment has limited storage and battery time and one needs to choose what to record or have unlimited access to 'ready' equipment, which I did not. Second, there is the issue of movement. In meetings, participants usually stand or sit relatively still and it is possible to set up a stand-alone camera; however, outside the meeting room, participants are often on the move, going to talk with different people, having a coffee, looking at others' screen, etc., and in order to record these activities one would need a handhold camera, GoPro, or similar. This may be possible, but it would be somewhat intrusive for the interactions and would constantly draw attention to the 'outsiderness' of the researcher. Thus, I decided to only observe the interaction outside of meetings.

5.3.4 Transcribing

As the introduction to CA outlined (section 4.2), transcriptions and the transcription process are central elements when performing CA-informed microanalyses. In the following, I will briefly describe the process of reviewing and selecting fragments for analysis and the transcription approach.

Transcriptions are to be understood as *representations* of empirical materials rather than of reality itself; that is, just as the recordings are restricted in the sense that they cannot capture all sensory experiences of a situation, transcriptions must be treated as representations of the recording – representations that can differ depending on transcription choices. The advantage of transcriptions of recordings, compared to, for example, field notes, is that they provide access to the micro-details of the interaction in ways field notes cannot. Furthermore, the benefits of recordings and transcriptions are their availability – you can always go back to them and analyse them further, as well as transcribe them into more detail if necessary (Psathas, 1995). I also

want to note that while the meeting sequences have been transcribed according to CA transcription conventions, the interviews were not transcribed in this manner but were instead transcribed orthographically.

In this study, I have transcribed meeting excerpts according to the minimal CA transcription convention (Nielsen & Nielsen, 2005), which provides a relatively high level of detail. The conventions for CA transcriptions have been developed over many years by Jefferson (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013; Jefferson, 1988, 2004), and although the minimal convention does not include as many details as she suggests, the convention has, as Nielsen and Nielsen (2005) note, proven sufficient for many CA scholars over the years. It seems that especially for scholars performing applied CA, the minimal transcription convention is considered sufficient. Thus, I could have added more details to the excerpts, and if the intention had been to do basic CA research, thus centralizing the linguistic phenomena, this would have been necessary. However, considering the aim of the study, I have tried to find a suitable level and focus on the interactional phenomena that I consider to be important for the analyses. With regard to transcription symbols, the approach taken in this study has been inspired by the use of arrows, rather than full stops or commas, as shown by Steensig[8] to show final rising or falling intonation (transcription key can be found in Appendix 1). The use of symbols in the transcriptions is intended to capture the way talk is heard (Boden, 1994).

Embodied interaction has been transcribed where possible (video recordings) and relevant for the ongoing interaction. Movements often occur simultaneously with talking turns or pauses, and I have tried to display this in the transcripts by placing the movement one line above the talk/pause that it happens simultaneously with. There are other approaches to displaying movement (Cowan, 2014; Due & Bierring Lange, 2017; Mondada, 2016); however, since this study is not focused on embodied action itself but instead treats it as a part of the talk-in-interaction, I chose to display bodily action as mentioned. If embodied actions or if the moment-by-moment use of materials had been the central analytical interest, other transcription approaches, e.g. as demonstrated by Mondada (2016), would have been preferred.

The empirical material for this study contains 60 recordings of meetings, and although it would have been preferable to have all the meetings transcribed, I did not have the time or resources for this work, or the time to sufficiently analyse all the transcripts had the meetings been transcribed. Instead, I focused on the recordings, and during the initial phases as well as later on in the more focused analyses I listened and viewed the recordings (some of them again and again) to let phenomena initially emerge in this way. When instances seemed interesting, these where then transcribed and analysed in detail. Some were then discarded and some were used as the analyses progressed. This means that although I have not transcribed all the meetings, I have a substantial number of transcriptions, not all of which have been used in this dissertation. This also means that the excerpts selected for the analytical chapters are, for the most part, selected from

[8] At a CA network meeting (Movin) at the University of Copenhagen, 12 April 2013.

multiple examples that illustrate the same phenomena; however, some of the excerpts do also illustrate unique phenomena. The excerpts that were selected are those that 'best' capture the phenomena and were the most demarcated, in that they make sense to the reader and illustrate the phenomena in one excerpt rather than several.

5.3.5 Overview of empirical material

Table 4, below, represents the complete set of empirical material for this dissertation.

	Interviews	**Hours of observations (approx.)**	**Audio recordings (Number of meetings)**	**Video recordings (Number of meetings)**	**Pages of field notes[9]**
Copenhagen, Denmark	15	70	11	17	82
London, UK		65	12	5	73
Maidenhead, UK		32	6		39
Charlotte, USA		32	8	7	36
India		30			47
In total	**15**	**229**	**37**	**29**	**277**

Table 4. Overview of the empirical material

Additional types of data included pictures, charts, team overviews, PowerPoint presentations, etc. Furthermore, communication with internals (e.g. informal conversations, email correspondence, workshops, internal communication about organizational changes, revenue, visions) has influenced the process and my understanding of the organizational context

[9] In Microsoft Word.

5.3.5.1 *Limiting the data types*

When I designed my data collection, I considered not only what types of data I could get access to but also how much data I would actually have time to use productively. I concluded that I would not include any types of written communication (e.g. emails, chat, etc.). Only written communication that I actively witnessed being written as part of the observations would be considered, and even then this would only be my notes of the communication, not the material itself. I decided to exclude these partly because of the practical issues of attaining them and partly because I was interested in situational interactions rather than written communication. Finally, I had already acquired a substantial amount of data through interviews, observations, and recordings, and had I gotten access to the project managers' inboxes or just the emails of the days of observations, my dataset would have expanded significantly, and I did not think it likely that I would be able to sufficiently process or analyse all this data.

5.3.6 Validity and reliability

Validity in qualitative research is primarily concerned with the credibility of analytical findings, whereas reliability is concerned with the accuracy and transparency of the research process and analysis (Peräkylä, 2016). Qualitative studies such as this one do not comply with the validity and reliability requirements of quantitative research, yet it is highly relevant for qualitative researchers to consider validity and reliability, by focussing on the strengths and credibility of argumentations and transparency of processes, rather than focusing on testability and generalizability.

As mentioned initially, this study uses a mixed methods approach, drawing on interviews, observations, and recordings of meetings, which allows for the triangulation of the data (Nielsen & Nielsen, 2005). This means that the different materials can be used to compare and question analytical findings, pointing to similarities or discrepancies in interpretations and thereby strengthening argumentation. In the analyses, this triangulation process is actively used to provide nuanced findings, and it is clearly indicated how the findings are reached and on which type of data they are based. In that sense, the triangulation helps to ensure the validity of the conclusions.

Furthermore, the CA and MCA methods used in this study force the analyst to ground all findings in naturally occurring data and to ensure that all claims are based on empirical findings. The concept *next-turn proof procedure* (Sacks et al., 1974) is central in 'checking' the credibility of analyst's interpretations; that is, 'the next turn will show whether the interactants themselves treat the utterance in ways that are in accordance with the analyst's interpretations' (Peräkylä, 2016, p. 416). Consistently through the analyses, the analyst needs to make explicit how interpretations are reached, grounding findings in data. By relying on

both CA and MCA, findings on sequential and categorical ordering can be related, ensuring that claims about, for instance, categorizations and the institutional character of the interactions are validated (Peräkylä, 2016). Also, it is important to remember that transcriptions of recordings are *representations* of data and are thus not the actual data. In the transcription process, choices about detail level are made that impact the reading, and transcriptions cannot capture all features of the talk (e.g. dialects. This is something that the researcher needs to be aware of and a sufficient level of detail needs to be included to ensure the validity of the analyses. Reflections on the transcription process in this study are outlined above (section 5.3.4).

Furthermore, in carrying out observations and interviews, it is relevant that the interviewer understands that interviews are institutional contexts; that is, the institutional 'identities of the interviewer and interviewee are made relevant by parties of the interview' (Peräkylä, 2016, p. 419). Thus, the interviewer needs to acknowledge that the interaction and possibly what is being said during the interviews are influenced by the interview setting. Reflections on the interviewees and other participants' orientations are outlined above (section 5.3.2.4).

In the above sections, and the sections that follow, I have attempted to explain the research process in detail and thereby produce transparency about the process of collecting data, organizing data, and selecting data examples, as well as analysing these (this is further detailed in the final section of this chapter). In contrast to, for example, linguistic-oriented CA studies, this study does not systematically explore linguistic phenomena but rather explores selected excerpts that can help to inform us of social phenomena in projects. In this way, the study does not strive for generalizability or to produce statistical reliability, in contrast with quantitative research (and some types of CA research).

5.3.7 Confidentiality

As is common in both qualitative and quantitative studies, I have anonymized all participants and events in the material used for my analyses in order to ensure confidentiality (Silverman, 2013). My research, and in particular the observations, have involved a large number of people in the organization, and to ensure that the participants are not recognizable I have changed their names in the empirical material that I present for analysis as well as in my notes, overviews of data, etc. Furthermore, I store the data in compliance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into force in 2018.

Before the empirical material was collected, I ensured that the participants understood that I would not use their names in my analyses or report to the organization what I heard or learnt about or from individuals. I also asked the project managers to sign an informed consent, which stated what the project was about, my role, what the anonymized data could and would be used for, and that it was for open research. I decided that it would be too extensive for everyone who was involved to a lesser extent to sign an informed consent (e.g. some were minimally involved, e.g. the actors who participated in virtual meetings but did not speak, making

only their names available to me due to the meeting invitation); however, I did ask the project managers to get verbal consent from their teams before the observations and I ensured that permission was given before meetings were recorded.

5.4 Analytical Process

In the following section, I will comment on the overall analytical approach and then describe the analytical processes for the initial analyses of the interviews and observations and then for each of the three central analyses. Finally, I will explain the structure of the three analytical chapters and then comment on why I decided to write a monograph, rather than a paper-based dissertation.

5.4.1 The analytical approach

The approach of this study is founded on the principles of ethnomethodology, CA, and MCA, which entail an initially inductive exploration of data and then later (potentially) a more abductive analytical approach (Svennevig, 2001). Alvesson and Kärreman (2007) suggest centring the empirical material, stressing 'the potential of empirical material as a resource for developing theoretical ideas through the active mobilization and problematization of existing frameworks' (p. 1265) and that the material can be a 'critical dialogue partner … that problematizes a significant form of understanding' (p. 1266). Rather than trying to revise or test theories, the intent of the approach in this study is to let empirical phenomena emerge inductively and then in an abductive process use theoretical lenses to consider the phenomena and at the same time use the findings to problematize existing theoretical assumptions (Svennevig, 2001).

For me, selecting the analytical focus, based on the empirical materials, was a challenging process. In the beginning, when I started to review the recordings and to transcribe, several times I pursued analytical interest which I after some time abandoned due to, for instance, a lack of contribution, fragmentation of focus, etc. I found that it took a great deal of time and effort to find and choose the 'right' direction for my dissertation as well as the more specific analytical foci, and even today, after the analyses are written, I am very aware that the dissertation could have taken other directions.

5.4.2 Initial analysis of the interviews

The process of reviewing and analysing the interviews was iterative and the approach developed throughout. Initially, after the interviews were collected, I did a thematic coding and analysis of the interviews. The aim of this was to organize and make the data accessible for further analysis later and in order to discover

phenomena that would be relevant to explore. First, I read through the interviews, not looking for specific phenomena but instead allowing different phenomena to emerge: I coded the data by marking sections of content that I found to be interesting. These sections where then reviewed again, and, through this, categories were developed. These were then examined across the interviews and then further categories developed and patterns and contrasts appeared. For this process, I used the software NVivo. This approach produced a systematically organized dataset and revealed patterns across the interviews.

Although the initial process of looking through the data was not 'directed' at specific categories or theoretically derived phenomenon, the interviews were of course focused in that I, qua my research interest, had included specific topics in the interviews and left out others. Later, as I worked on the analytical sections, the interviews were reviewed again, and this time I did look for specific phenomena, shifting from undirected exploration to focused examination, and considering how this related to my other empirical findings and theoretical concepts.

5.4.3 Initial analysis of the observations

After I had completed the observations, I wanted to create an overview of possible patterns in the material and to get 'a feel' of what the observations could 'show'.

Firstly, I transferred my notes from paper to computer and imported them into NVivo. Hereafter, I started to thematically code the observations. First, I read through the observations, coding sections I found interesting. Then I reviewed the observations again and saw patterns in what I had coded. This allowed me to extract the first set of overall categories. Hereafter, I revisited the coded sections, systematically focusing on coding specific categories, such as project managers' activities, groups of actors, etc., and thereby also developed subcategories. At this point, I did not search for specific phenomena but instead coded in order to organize the data in a manner that was accessible for the later, focused analysis.

The initial coding gave me an impression of what I could and could not use the observational data for. I extracted some of the overall patterns and presented these to the project manager community within MLIT as part of my agreement with my company supervisor.

Later, this initial coding helped me explore when/where phenomena occurred, and as the analytical sections were being developed the observations were reviewed again as necessary.

5.4.4 Analysis 1: Analytical process

The analytical interest of Analysis 1, order and ordinariness in complex projects, emerged inductively as I was working with what turned into the second analytical chapter. When I explored the empirical material, it

became evident that there were patterns and similarities across the observations and recordings; the days of the project managers looked quite comparable, and in several of the meetings the interactions seemed to be similarly structured. However, at the same time, it was evident that the actors did handle much complexity, and the interviews illustrated that the actors were very aware of this (although they used different words to describe it).

After the interest emerged, I began to systematically review the empirical material. Starting with the interviews, I reread these and then thematically organized interview sequences. I focused on how complexity and uncertainty were reported by noting what they talked about as particularly challenging or complex, either implicitly or explicitly. Then, I reviewed the observations, focusing on two things: 1) how and what the actors handled/oriented to or talked about as complex or uncertain (implicitly /explicitly) and 2) patterns across the observations with regard to activities, who the project managers interacted with, which meetings they participated in, their behaviour, etc. To do this, I used some of the initial coding of the observations, but I also had to expand on these and read notes from each of the observations again.

Hereafter, I moved to recordings and transcriptions, as I was particularly interested in exploring the situated practices of the actors. After reviewing some of the meetings, I decided to focus on meetings where only internal project team members were present. The purpose of this was to focus and limit the scope of the analysis. I then started selecting and reviewing 'internals only' meetings, and it turned out that there were actually quite few of these meeting, indicating the substantial amount of external contact that these projects have.

Hereafter, followed a more extensive analytical process where interactional phenomena in different fragments and excerpts were identified. Deciding how many fragments to include and what interactional phenomena to stress, I attempted to balance practical concerns, rich analytical material and findings, and a stringent analytical focus (Nielsen & Nielsen, 2005). As mentioned previously, from amongst several excerpts, I selected six excerpts, collectively demonstrating three phenomena. I decided to use two excerpts to demonstrate each phenomenon to illustrate the similarities across situations but also the varieties of the phenomena.

5.4.5 Analysis 2: Analytical process

The second analytical chapter of the dissertation was actually the first of the three analyses to be written, although it has been through extensive reviews since then. The interest in unexpected events arose because during the observations I experienced that unexpected events occurred and had great impact on the projects, and this made me interested in how the actors handled these situations in practice. Thus, the interest emerged somewhat inductively, already during the data collection.

Due to this interest, I started to explore the data set and found instances where some types unexpectedness were talked about; thus, I did a 'motivated' review of the interviews, observations, and recordings. Here, the combination of the three types of data proved useful, as I had made several observational notes about unexpected matters, which helped me to find the situational handling of the unexpectedness (in the recordings) and of course also provided the contextual setting. The interviews also revealed how the actors oriented towards the risk of unexpectedness as part of their work setting.

With regard to selecting interview quotes and observational sections, I firstly concentrated on the observations. I read through and selected sections for the analysis, which showed different episodes where projects were facing unexpectedness, ultimately selecting one due to the length of the chapter. The interview quotes did not as such mention unexpected events, although they did mention other related topics such as risk management, etc. Thus, in this analysis, the interviews were not used as much as in the other analyses and were only used to complement the observational findings.

For the micro-analysis, there were not that many recorded examples to choose from. This was not because unexpectedness did not occur but was instead because much of it was talked about outside of meetings or because I could not capture the unexpectedness in *one* meeting, since I would have needed to track it across several meetings to make it evident. In retrospect, this *could* have been interesting, as it could have attended to the processual development of the events as well as allowed me to explore temporal aspects. However, at this point I was more interested in doing a comparative analysis of the situational management of unexpected events, and I found that two different meetings showed distinct types of unexpectedness, handled uniquely in each meeting. I find that these two meetings and the fragments chosen for analysis illustrated the unexpectedness in a demarcated manner. As I worked with the detailed analyses of these two meetings, I began to consider how to conceptualize my findings theoretically and came to draw on the concept of routines (Feldman, 2016; LeBaron et al., 2016) and use this to understand the actors' management of unexpectedness.

5.4.6 Analysis 3: Analytical process

The third analysis was the last analysis to be written; however, the theme was one of the first to catch my attention. During the interviews, and later as I observed the project teams, it became evident that the project managers and teams had regular contact and close collaboration with business stakeholders and the vendors. In the interviews, I initially noticed how the project managers talked about the vendor teams in very different ways, and I became interested in how the project teams related to the vendor teams. Thus, the empirical interest and phenomena emerged during the data collection process. Empirically, there seemed to be something interesting going on here, and there were obviously clear differences in the way the project teams interacted with the different types of stakeholders.

I began the analytical process by systematically reviewing the recordings of meetings, finding sequences that at first glance seemed relevant. These were then reviewed and categorized according to how the teams seemed to relate to each other, that is, if the actors oriented to the relationships being either problematic or unproblematic. These sequences were then reviewed again, transcribed, and further analysed. Finally, two 'medium-sized' fragments and a rather lengthy fragment were selected, each showing different points about the relations in intra- and interorganizational projects. However, at this point, I did not know how to treat these findings theoretically.

Thus, I also began to explore relevant theories and concepts that could inform the analysis, deciding on identification as a relevant lens. Therefore, this analytical process evolved from an inductive to a more abductive approach as the interplay between theory and empirical material shaped the analytical focus on the project actors' productions of categorizations/identifications and how these in practice influence the ongoing work and collaboration.

After I had performed the fine-grained analysis of fragments, I again revisited the observational and interview material. In particular, the observations were helpful in that they provided context for the micro-analysis (e.g. team structure, locations) and showed other situations that were not captured by the recordings. Sections from the interviews and observational material were selected with the aim of providing context to the meeting interactions, showing aspects that the micro-analysis could not capture, and illustrating why I (initially and later) found these phenomena to be interesting to explore.

Overall, common for all three analyses is that they all, more or less, draw on the different kinds of empirical materials: interviews, observations, and transcriptions/recordings. Furthermore, the three analytical sections are structured in similar manners: Firstly, the research interest and focus are explained; and, secondly, the interview and/or observational material is analysed and used to establish a foundation (of findings, questions, and mysteries), which is then explored in the micro-analyses. The micro-analyses are the most extensive parts, and the organization differs slightly from chapter to chapter. Thus, there are differences across the three analytical sections and they are intended to be able to be read individually, but at the same time the analytical findings relate and collectively contribute to answering the central research question.

In Chapter 9, the analytical process and methods, including the inductive/abductive approach, will be reflected upon.

5.4.7 From papers to monograph

Initially, I intended to write a paper-based dissertation, with the plan being to write three papers aimed at project studies journals or organizational journals. However, as I began to structure the first paper, I faced a challenge: Within project studies, my methodological approach is very different from the otherwise often-

used quantitative approaches. I have not been able to find any project studies that deploys CA, MCA, and/or ethnomethodology, and although it is a (small) growing trend in organizational studies, it is still rare. Considering the timeframe and interests of this study, I was afraid that it would take too much time and space to explain my methodological approach (both in the papers and to editors). Thus, I found that a monograph might be better suited for this study.

The monograph-format offers the opportunity to thoroughly reflect on theory, concepts, etc. and include more data examples in the analyses. This is particularly helpful when working as I do, with theory from one field and a method from another, since the different areas may have different perspectives on concepts, approaches, etc. due to varied epistemological and ontological foundations.

Upon deciding to write a monograph, I also decided to keep the three separate analyses (although final themes were not decided) that I had planned for the paper-based dissertation, as I found this separation would help focus the analysis and assist the writing process. The final structure of the dissertation, with three distinct analyses, is thus a result of the initial paper-based approach.

Looking back, it would probably have been possible to write a paper-based dissertation, and if I had been where I am now at that time, in terms of knowledge, understanding, and experience, I might have chosen differently. The dissertation is thus very much a reflection of the overall process.

6 Analysis 1: Creating Order and Ordinariness

Previous project studies have shown that as projects become increasingly globalized, interrelated, and interdependent on other projects, functions, or externals, the complexity of the setting escalates (section 2.3). Due to the complexity of the setting, the actors continuously need to find ways to understand their own work, their roles, and the project in the ever-changeable setting.

However, the initial empirical explorations of this study suggest that rather than being constantly changeable, to the observer, the project work seems quite mundane and repetitive. This is puzzling. It seems that there is a discrepancy between the perception of projects as extremely difficult to manage and work within due to environmental complexity and changeability and the actual observations of seemingly unproblematic, 'business-as-usual' execution of the project work in practice.

The following analysis will explore this tension between complexity and apparent order and ordinariness within project settings. More specifically, the analysis will explore the experiences of challenges and complexity and what *actually* happens in the projects. This analytical chapter seeks to contribute to answering the central research question by exploring the two following questions:

1. In complex projects, how do project actors produce order?
2. In complex projects, how do project actors situationally produce their setting and work as ordinary?

Here I think it is relevant to make a few brief comments about the terms complexity, ordinariness and order to make it clear how these are understood and used in this analysis.

First, *order* is here understood as the existence or emergence of a shared sense, that what is going on makes sense and is manageable. This order exists and is displayed in interaction – we are not looking at how individuals for themselves construct a certain situation, but how participants in an interaction together construct and treat what is going on as sensible and manageable (rather than chaotic, confusing, etc.) Thus, the analysis will explore how the actors make the complexity of their work setting understandable and manageable and thereby create order situationally; thus, we understanding this order as achieved rather than given. The notion of order is accurately described by Whittle and Housley (2017):

> if we look at organizations and see that they manifest some kind of stability over time, some kind of 'patterned orderliness' to use their term, then we must therefore assume that, first, this is something that

> people must work constantly to achieve and secondly, that they therefore must have some shared methods for achieving this patterned orderliness. (p. 186)

It is exactly these patterns of orderliness and the methods through which the actors achieve this, that this analysis will explore. In that, this analysis will attend to a gap in project research, in that, this line of research scarcely explores the fundamental production of order, but rather the reestablishment of order in disorderly situations.

Ordinariness or the ordinary is what the actors take as being normal and familiar within the situated context. Sacks (1984) has shown how actors, in order to make their actions sensible to others, attempt *doing being ordinary*, meaning that they do actions that can be considered situationally 'normal' by those specific actors (section 4.2). Ordinariness here is understood from a members' perspective; that is, when we observe the actors go about the work unproblematically and treat it as recognizable, as 'nothing special', we can take it to be orientations to the ordinariness of the situation. This also demands that actions and utterances need to be accountable and sensible to the others in the particular situation.

Finally, as section 2.3.1 outlined, *complexity* is in this study used to understand and describe the project context in practice. The interviews of this study were conducted as an initial probing in order to understand how the project managers themselves understood their role, work setting and the organization. In the interviews, questions about challenges, project structure, interdependencies etc. were asked, but none of the questions explicitly used the word. However, as I later reviewed the interviews, I noticed how the project managers' experiences could be connected to complexity, either directly or indirectly. Theoretically, complexity can be addressed from a number of perspectives, one of these as being strongly related to uncertainty. Complexity is an analyst's term used to analyse the actors' experiences of and orientations to difficulty, uncertainty, and unpredictability; thus, matters that seem to be related to contextual or environmental complexity are taken as signs of complexity.

The analytical chapter is structured as follows: Firstly, findings from a content analysis of the interviews and observational material will demonstrate general patterns across the observations of the project managers' work days and hereafter outline experiences of challenges due to complexity. This section considers the way in which environmental complexity translates to practical issues for the project actors. Secondly, we turn to explore the production of order and ordinariness; a microanalysis of fragments from four different project teams will demonstrate the interactional resources with which the actors produce their work setting as manageable and 'ordinary', despite reportedly experiencing the setting as unpredictable. Finally, the findings will be related and the paradox of observable order and experiences of complexity will be considered.

6.1 Order and Ordinariness in Complexity

In this section, I will present empirical findings from the interview and observational material, which demonstrate what seems to be ordinary and orderly actions and activities in the project actors' work life and what they experience in terms of challenges that seem to relate to project complexity. The section first briefly addresses some general patterns across observations and then considers some of the most commonly mentioned (and observed) challenges.

6.1.1 Observational patterns

In the observations of the project managers and their teams, patterns of behaviours, actions, activities, and project structures, etc. became visible. In order to analyse the complexities and ordinariness of the project actors' work-lives, it seemed relevant to firstly outline some of the more general patterns observed, thereby constituting a basis for considering complexities of the work setting. The patterns across observations were revealed through coding and categorization of the observations, and the most relevant patterns for this analysis have been summarized in Table 5, below.

Also, note that a detailed description of a project manager's work day has been included in Appendix 3.

Many stakeholders (Only the most central mentioned to the right)	• IT organization: the project team, department heads, programme leads, the Project Management Office, Procurement, Finance, other IT project teams/managers, etc. • Business/customer organization: the business project manager, sponsors, end users, business project team, etc. • Vendor organization: the vendor team lead, the vendor team, department heads, etc.
Virtual collaboration through ICT	• The IT project teams are often distributed across more than two locations and collaborate virtually. Most teams have either daily or weekly virtual meetings. • The IT project teams is very rarely co-located with the business and they work together through ICT. The parties usually have one weekly meeting. • The vendors are mostly located in India or other Asian countries and thus require virtual collaboration across several time zones. The IT

	team/project manager usually has meetings with the vendor daily or weekly.
The teams	• The teams can include roles such as: project manager, project coordinator, business analyst, technical analyst, test manager, solution architects, etc. Which roles are included depends on the type and size of project. The projects always have a project manager, but depending on the size of the project the manager might have other projects as well. • The team members often originate from different countries.
Project manager (PM) activities	• Activities at the computer: e-mailing, online chat, work on communication materials such as slides or reports, updating the organizational project management system, work on project artefacts/documents (e.g. business cases, budget and expense management, time sheets), and reading reports. • Interactions outside of meetings: The PM has face-to-face small talk with people in the office – talking and joking. Frequently makes quick phone calls to different project actors or others in the organization. If located in the same office, the PMs also regularly interact informally with their own managers.
Meetings	• The project manager and actors participate in many meetings with the different stakeholders. Some meetings are recurring meetings (daily, bi-weekly, weekly, or monthly) and some are one-off meetings. • The meeting talk often evolves around: updates, status reporting, organizing responsibilities and future actions, discussing problems and how to solve them, etc. • The meetings are either: 1) face-to-face (planned or ad hoc), 2) phone calls or conference calls at the desk or in a meeting room, 3) conference calls in a room where face-to-face, local participants are also present, with or without shared screen, and 4) video meetings (only one observation of this).

Table 5. Observational patterns

Thus, in practice there are many commonalities across projects (at least in this organization) and there seems to be a 'patterned orderliness' (Whittle & Housley, 2017, p. 186) on an observable level and the actors seemingly orient to their activities etc. as ordinary in the context. Further, as the following section will make

clear, the project actors experience a range of challenges connected with these patterns, which although seemingly ordinary and orderly nonetheless cause complexity and can be complex to handle.

6.1.2 Experiencing complexity

In the observations and interviews, several matters seemed to suggest that the actors are working in a complex environment. These will be thematically outlined in the following section.

6.1.2.1 *Stakeholders*

Stakeholders and many relations were one of the most common themes and recurrent challenges mentioned in the interviews. In particular, the project managers reported collaborations with many different stakeholders and emphasized the many interlinks and dependencies between their projects and other projects or organizational units. The aim of the projects in this organization is to develop IT systems and technologies requested by the 'business side'. As the projects are initiated, and before the actual development work can begin, there is typically a 'back-and-forth' process between IT and business in which the project goals, requirements, timeline etc. are aligned on. In this process, it often becomes apparent how many interdependencies and interrelations the project has on other projects or activities in departments/organizational units.

One of the interviewees explained:

> we did a stakeholder analysis when we started up the project, typically project management stuff, and I don't think we missed any of the IT department or any of the business departments in that, every single function. (Interview: Ashish, Project manager)

For a project to have stakeholders in all the 'IT departments' and all the 'business departments' suggests a tremendous number of stakeholders. Consequently, the task of a project manager becomes more challenging, as a high number of stakeholders implies more objectives, aims, ways of working, dependencies, time requests, etc. to take into consideration and many people, with different goals and ideas, to keep informed, align, and negotiate with. Furthermore, organizational interests and personal perceptions, attitudes, prior experiences, as well as 'pragmatic, moral and cognitive logics' (Floricel et al., 2016, p. 1364) influence how actors approach the project, the collaboration with other stakeholders, and how they engage in the work and negotiations about the project. The 'human factor' is challenging and influences the planning and execution of the projects. As noted by Floricel et al. (2016):

> Actors also change positions in response to other actors' arguments. All this diminishes planners' control over the negotiation process and its outcome predictability, and makes planning for institutionally complex projects a long process, forcing project concepts through several restructurings before an acceptable arrangement is found. (p. 1364)

The observations make it apparent that the project managers spend the majority of the work days in meetings with stakeholders (from the business, the vendor, or internals). Thus, it seems that much of the project managers' work is performed through talk (Boden, 1994). Similarly, more than 40 years ago, Mintzberg (1973), in his study of managers, found that managers spend most of their work day in verbal conversation. Today, the picture seems very similar, and even when the project managers are not participating in meetings they are for the most part communicating with others, either face-to-face or virtually. The virtual means can in some ways be seen as adding pressure to the project managers and actors in the sense that they are expected to constantly inform stakeholders and be informed. The observations illustrated that the project managers not only had to inform stakeholders about progress and changes in their regular (weekly/bi-weekly) meeting, but that they were in fact expected to instantly give notice to the business if the project or system they were working on experienced difficulties (as it could have direct business consequences; cf. Appendix 3). This pressure to constantly inform and keep stakeholders satisfied is both time-consuming and demanding.

Consequently, the more stakeholders that are involved in the project, the more challenging and uncertain it becomes, as control is reduced and it becomes difficult to predict the reactions and actions of the different stakeholders. A high number of stakeholders can thus be understood as a sign of complexity.

6.1.2.2 *Interdependencies*

Another interviewee also mentioned the challenge of having many interrelations and dependencies throughout the organization:

> In this organization for me right now, the challenge is still to get a grasp on how my project interfaces with the rest of the organization, what processes are there, is there something I need to be aware of, which I'm not automatically aware of. As for example, when we went live in three countries, we should have had hyper-care, our development team were supposed to supervise the rollout and help solve different problems, but I had a completely different perception of what it was than the others had, and I had to go around and ask people what is this hyper-care because there was no one who could refer to some specific description. (Simon, Project Manager. Translated from Danish)

In this quote, there are several matters that can be understood as consequences of, as well as signs of, complexity. This project manager is relatively new to the organization and describes that he tries to 'grasp' how his project interfaces with other units and that he does not have a complete overview of processes and points of 'awareness'. This suggests that there is a high number of interlinks with the rest of the organization and that these are not transparent, since he must 'discover' them himself. That the many processes and connections to other projects are not clear from the start makes it difficult, particularly for a newcomer, to sort out relevant interdependencies. This can be considered a *wicked problem* (Grint, 2005), especially for this project manager, due to his newcomer role. A wicked problem is 'complex, rather than just complicated, it is often intractable, there is no unilinear solution ... it is novel, any apparent "solution" often generates other "problems"' (Grint, 2005, p. 1473). Over time, as the project manager acquires more organizational knowledge and develops into a more competent organizational member, this may become a *tame problem* for him, which is 'complicated but is resolvable through unilinear acts' (Grint, 2005, p. 1473). However, at this moment, for this project manager, the complexity of the environment in combination with a lack of transparency affects him in practice. And even for experienced project managers, it seems that it is challenging to keep track of all processes and identify all interdependencies.

In general, in the interviews, the challenge of interlinks, dependencies, and interdependencies between and within projects was frequently mentioned. For instance:

> A holistic view is also very important so that you can look further down the path, but at the same time solve this problem, and find out if we do not solve this problem, what does that mean the other things, see the domino effect. (Interview: Andreas, Project Manager. Translated from Danish)

The project manager mentions the 'domino effect', indicating that if one thing goes wrong, this will impact other activities or perhaps projects. This implies the tremendous overview of the setting that the project managers are expected (or expect themselves) to have; they need to have a holistic view and consider contingencies not only in regard to their own projects but also how it interlinks and influences/is influenced by other projects. There is a need for both a focus on the here-and-now as well as on possible futures, and the project managers are required to assess what can possibly happen and the immediate consequences. Consequently, the many interdependencies means many contingencies, and this causes uncertainty in terms of what will happen – this can thus be considered a sign of high complexity (Geraldi et al., 2011). In particular, it becomes problematic for practitioners if there are hidden interdependences or interdependencies that they are not aware of (due to a lack of transparency), as these can cause unpleasant 'surprises and prompt forecast reevaluation' (Floricel et al., 2016, p. 1365). In a way, the project managers are required to predict matters before they happen, despite lacking a complete overview and control of all variables. In practice, this can create wicked problems for the actors, in particular for unexperienced project managers or newcomers to the organization.

6.1.2.3 *Working virtually*

Having a high number of stakeholders becomes even more complex and challenging in practice if these stakeholders (project team, vendors, customers, etc.) are distributed globally. The project teams are working virtually with their own team members and collaborate to accomplish tasks that in themselves can be complicated, and the projects teams also work closely with vendors through virtual means. In addition, they have regular collaboration and coordination with other project teams due to interdependencies. In particular, the development work, which requires a variety of professional skill sets, involves vendor organizations. These vendors are often tasked with specific system development and testing activities.
In the interviews, several project managers emphasized the challenge of not being co-located with the people (both vendors and internal team members) that they collaborate with on a daily basis. In an interview, one of the project managers mentioned the challenge of collaborating with people 'offshore':

> I think trust becomes an issue due to lack of dialogue and feedback about things, and that can happen with the person sitting right opposite you.… I think the problem with people being offshore is that it is inherently more difficult to have that kind of dialogue, you have to be much more structured and compensate with you know one-to-one regularly or somehow verifying the work that they are doing so that you keep that trust, cause if you see something going wrong, you usually learn about it after the fact, via email or something and you 'wow, that sounds really bad, that guy does not know what the hell he is doing', and then you lose confidence in them right. (Interview: Adam, Project Manager)

When projects members or stakeholders are distributed, it complicates matters, since actors need to consider relevant virtual communication media, time zones, cultural aspects, etc. Previous studies have shown that virtual communication media can in itself be problematic, as these are less rich than face-to-face communication (in terms of communicative resources available) (Daft & Lengel, 1986), and thus it is more challenging to convey or discuss complex topics virtually; in that sense, the lack of very sophisticated virtual communication media can be understood as producing greater challenges with regard to collaboration (Latané, Liu, Nowak, Bonevento, & Zheng, 1995; Olson & Olson, 2000). Also, as the above quote illustrates, simply the lack of face-to-face interaction has implications for the collaboration and trust between partners. The lack of face-to-face interaction and delays in communication has been shown to negatively affect trust and relations between collaboration partners (Elsbach et al., 2010). Working globally with several different partners and teams can thus pose practical challenges in terms of mediated communication and time differences (Berry, 2011; Yang, Kherbachi, Hong, & Shan, 2015), but it may also have direct implications for social relations, trust, knowledge sharing, and communication. However, despite the challenges of the global setup, the actors seem to navigate this virtual way of communicating rather effortlessly. This does not

mean that this way of collaborating is not complex or does not produce challenges; rather, it can be seen as an expression of the actors' experience and proficiency level.

6.1.2.4 *Changeability*

As I observed the project teams, I also saw several indications that they oriented towards their work setting as uncertain and changeable. The following quote from a weekly update meeting illustrates that projects are constantly impacted by changes in the organizational environment (e.g. new decisions, errors, activities) and that they are aware of the uncertainty that this complex setting creates:

> Sarah: It shouldn't be that in August when we are ready to roll it out we find out that we got another tool which needs to be mapped now.
>
> Paul: Well... Well, we didn't know last week that ReBox System was gonna be decommissioned so who knows Sarah what ehm the world is gonna be like in August… but we can only plan on what we know and what we can guess out. (Observation: Ashish)

The quote exemplifies that the project actors cannot predict every event that can influence the project (e.g. organizational activities or decisions, such as shutting down/decommissioning a system) but must be ready if such events occur. The project actors' orientation towards this uncertainty as inherent in the setting and their awareness that contingencies may change project plans was visible throughout most of the observations. For instance, it was made apparent by their frequent use of the word 'guesstimate' (Observation: Liz). Guesstimate means an estimate based on a combination of guesswork and calculation ("Guesstimate," 2018), and this was often used, both as a word to describe what they were doing but also as a practice in planning processes. During the observations, I noted how a project manager and a team member in a planning meeting talked about how their best 'guesstimate' was based on what they knew at that moment and what they expected to happen. This suggests that project planning is (partly) based on assumptions rather than facts, and that the actors, when planning, do not have an overview of all the variables. This makes it difficult to produce the holistic overview of the 'domino bricks' that interviewees mentioned as important.

In a professional setting as centred on planning and control as project management is, it is paradoxical that the project actors *in practice* are so aware of this discrepancy between planning and uncertainty; they do not assume that they can control and plan every detail of projects. Rather, they treat the need for both control and 'flexible planning' as an intrinsic aspect of their work, and they seem to quite effortlessly navigate in this intersection and balance planning and changeability. The explicit use of 'guestimates' suggests that the project actors produce a shared understanding of their setting as uncertain and the current project plan as changeable and contingent on environmental as well as project internal developments.

It seems that the actors orient towards finding practical solutions that incorporate long-term plans but which mostly need to work here and now, since the plans are based on the information they currently have, and since they can only 'guestimate' about the future. This enables them to make decisions in the moment while at the same time being aware that these projected actions and activities may change. In what Weick (1995) has referred to as a trade-off between speed and accuracy, the project actors in a sense choose speed and guesstimate what will get them closest to 'accuracy'; accuracy as such does not seem possible to plan for due to inherent environmental uncertainty.

Finally, it is relevant to note that many of the observed project managers explicitly told me that their projects are very challenging and complex. This usually happened when they, in the beginning of the observations, gave me some information about the project they managed. Some acknowledged that their work was not 'brain surgery', but at the same time described the challenging nature of the work setting and how busy they were during their work days. That the project managers felt it relevant to disclose to me that they think of their projects as complex but that they can handle it suggests that it is important for how they understand their work and themselves as project managers. They make an effort to construct identities for themselves that position themselves as competent professionals and as being able to handle difficult matters, and although there are aspects that seem complex to the observer, they are able to make it look relatively 'easy' and like an ordinary aspect of their work.

In sum, the actors in this organizational setting experience challenges that can be connected to complexity; that being: a high number of stakeholders, many interdependencies, virtual and globalized collaboration, and the continuous changeability of the organization and immediate project environment.

These matters create complexity for the project actors, which is observable as uncertainty and unpredictability on a project level. This complexity makes it difficult to plan long-term and control the project, and it necessitates that the actors continuously make sense of what is going on in order to adjust plans according to what is happening. Thus, there is a tension between the requirement for specific project' goals and for long-term comprehensive planning, and for situational sensemaking and continuous re-evaluation of plans in the local practice.

Although the above section makes it clear that the actors experience their work context as somewhat disordered, they can navigate in this intersection between demands and practical realities, and they are seemingly pragmatic with regard to the complexities of projects. However, we have yet to explore what actors do in situ to produce the observed ordinariness and order. We will attend to this in the following section.

6.2 Micro-Analysis: Producing Order and Ordinariness

In this section we will further explore the tension between orderliness and ordinariness and complexity. By analysing selected excerpts, this micro-analytical section attempts to answer *how* the observable order and ordinariness is *produced* in situated episodes of interaction in project settings influenced by complexity. The analysis will demonstrate that, despite the general experience of uncertainty and apparent environmental complexity, the actors simultaneously orient to their environments as complex and engage collaboratively in managing the uncertainty arising from this complexity, and thereby essentially produce their work setting as orderly and as ordinary, that is, as 'just another day at work'.

A collection of episodes of seemingly ordinary and orderly interactions emerged as the data was explored and patterns categorized (5.4.4). The specific excerpts presented for analysis here were selected as they show the interactional phenomena that contribute to the overall observations and production of order and ordinariness.

The data for this fine-grained analysis comes from four meetings. These meetings were audio- and video-recorded (in one of the meetings, only the screen was captured by video, as this was a telephone meeting with a shared screen). It is important to note that this analysis focus on interaction between *internal* project team members and how these, the core of the projects, collectively produce order in their work and the setting as ordinary, despite also experiencing challenges and uncertainty (as we learned in the section above). This may seem contradictory, as we previously noted that actors experience uncertainty in relation to the complex network of stakeholders and the unpredictability of the project work. The matters are also of utmost importance, and will thus be treated individually in the following analytical chapters (7 and 8).

The section is thematically structured according the interactional phenomena in focus. First, the excerpts will be analysed and the findings will be summarized thematically. Finally, the findings from the micro-analysis will be considered in relation to the observational findings as well as previous studies.

6.2.1 Terms and project-specific talk

Firstly, we will focus on how project actors use professional terms and project-specific talk to accomplish their work and what effect that has on the interaction. The analysis demonstrates that membership knowledge is important for establishing intersubjectivity and constructing a sense of order and ordinariness.

6.2.1.1 *Excerpt 1: 'data migration test you name it'*

Excerpt 1 is from a project team meeting where the team discuss and organize future work tasks. Participating in the meeting are Jonathan (JO), the project manager, and the team members Janus (JA), Rasmus (RA), Michael (MI), and Christian (CH). All are in the meeting room except Janus, who is working from home and participating via the phone and shared screen. They are going through the text written in a document (on the shared screen).

Reading through this excerpt, it is relevant to notice the terms used by the project actors and how the others orient towards these.

Excerpt 1

13	JA:	ehm (1.3) jah altså jeg skrev bare ind ehm sådan lige hvad jeg sådan
14		**ehm (1.3) yeah well i simply wrote ehm like what i like**
15		lynhurtigt hvad det hvad der var det kan garanteret uddybes med en masse
16		**super fast what the what it was it can presumably be elaborated on with a lot**
17		forskellige deliverables men eh
18		**of different deliverables but eh**
19	RA:	{gazes at JO}
20	JO:	{looks at AN in room and back at pc}
21	CH:	{nods}
22	JO:	=ja .h (.) data migration test you na[me it]
23		**=yes .h (.) data migration test you na[me it]**
24	JA:	[ja]
25		**[yeah]**
26	MI:	=mm
27		**=mm**
28	JA:	=ja
29		**=yes**
30	JO:	integrations (1.2) .t men det bliver vi jo selvfølgelig lidt klogere
31		**integrations (1.2) .t but of course we will come to know more about it**
32		om men øh det i hvert fald godt at have de: ↑store områder defined
33		**but eh at least it is good to have the: ↑big areas defined**
34	JO:	{looks at AS in room} {looks back at pc}
35	CH:	{nods}
36	JO:	nu (.) at vi øh vi ka- vi kan planlægge against them
37		**now (.) that we eh we ca- we can plan against them**
38	JO:	{gazes at JE}
39	RA:	{nods}
40	JO:	og så kan vi lave nogle sub deliverables eh når vi ↑starter vores analyse
41		**and then we can create some sub deliverables eh when we ↑start our analysis**

42 RA: {gazes towards screen}
43 (0.6)
44 CH: {leans forwards, taps on table}
45 JA: jah
46 **yeah**

In Excerpt 1, the team members are effortlessly and without difficulty using professional terms as a part of their work. In lines 13–18, Janus accounts for what he has written in their shared document and displays an orientation towards his work as insufficient ('can presumably be elaborated', line 16). Jonathan takes the turn with a hinged 'yes' and provides examples of things Janus could/should have included (lines 22–23 and 30–31). From lines 30-37, Jonathan delivers an assessment of the situation and explains why it is relevant to collect this information that they are talking about. Christian (line 35) and Rasmus (line 39) seem to claim understanding of his turn through their embodied actions (Mondada, 2011).

Jonathan uses terms such as 'deliverables' (lines 17-18), 'data migration' and 'test' (lines 22-23), 'integrations' (line 30-31), and 'plan against' (line 37). These words are used without explanation, which suggests that he takes their meaning to be known by the members of the project team – this is thus taken-for-granted knowledge (Garfinkel, 1967). Members can demonstrate their membership knowledge and competence and that they are 'in the know' (Boden, 1994) by being able to identify what is referenced to and by using the terms correctly (in that particular situation).

A word such as 'deliverable' is understandable to most, but within this setting the word carries specific meaning that makes sense to members of the project or organization. Words such as these pose what Goodwin (2003, p. 128) calls a 'recognition test for the hearer'. This entails that it is 'tested' whether the hearer can recognize and make sense of what is talked about. Understanding of what is said and possession of knowledge can in general either be demonstrated or claimed, as Sacks (1995) has shown; that is, actors can either *demonstrate* understanding, e.g. using the knowledge in their next-turn, or they can *claim* understanding, e.g. through nods or repeating what has been said. Thus, claims are weaker displays of knowledge/understanding than demonstrations. Here, Jonathan demonstrates, through his list (lines 22- 23 and 30-31), that he understands what 'different deliverables' could be in this context. Jonathan demonstrates project-specific as well as IT-relevant knowledge, while the team members claim understanding by nodding (Mondada, 2011; Stivers, 2008). Jonathan actively uses the terms to qualify the talk about the work and the terms are used as resources to assess the team member's work. The terms are thus important for assessing, organizing, and subsequently progressing with the work.

Finally, the actors create categorical order in the interaction through their discursive actions. All team members situationally construct relevant categories that relate to their institutional roles. Actions such as questioning, assessing and contextualizing, reporting, accounting, etc. index the actors' institutional roles,

and the actions are crafted in a way that they become category-bound actions (Sacks, 1995; Stokoe, 2012), making the categories 'project manager' and 'project team' relevant.

In the next excerpt, professional terms are also used without difficulty.

6.2.1.2 *Excerpt 2: 'reports we have captured'*

Excerpt 2 is from a weekly team meeting. In the room is the project manager Andrew (AN) and the team members Benjamin (BE), Merian (ME), Julie (JU), Pernille (PE), Isha (IS), and Sebastian (SE). On the phone is the team member Julia (JU). Here, it is particularly relevant again to notice the terms being used, as these seem to be directly connected to membership knowledge and understandings.

Excerpt 2

```
55 BE:    production we don't have any report
56 AN:    {nods}
57 AN:    right °good°
58 AN:    {turns gaze from BE to table}
59 AN:    WHAT OTHER reports we have captured↗
60        (4.2)
61        ((two click sounds from phone))
62 AN:    {looks up at BE}
63 BE:    {gazes at AN and then PC}
64 JU:    °excuse me° come ↑again
65 BE:    {gazes from PC to AN}
66 AN:    {looks at phone}
67 AN:    for the production↓ if there are issues that come up where are they being
68        captured↗
69        (2.0)
70 ME:    {gazes at phone}
71 BE:    {gazes at phone and leans forward}
72 IS:    {writes on her PC}
73 JU:    arh: they are not yet coming
```

As in Excerpt 1, the team members here effortlessly use professional terms and orient towards the use of these terms as sequentially and contextually relevant. These terms (e.g. 'production', 'reports we have captured', and 'issues') are denoted specific meanings and imply specific knowledge, actions, and artefacts in this work context (e.g. 'production' refers to an IT environment). So, when Benjamin states 'production

we don't have any report', he informs the others that there are no issues related to the production environment.

It is made clear by the conversation that 'report' is related to 'issues'. In line 59, Andrew asks a question, which he clarifies in lines 67–68 and here replaces the word 'reports' with 'issues'. It is unclear whether Julie, in line 64, asks for Andrew to repeat his question because she did not hear it or if she is asking for clarification. However, Andrew treats her 'come again' (line 62) as a need for reformulation, and he delivers a contextualized and expanded version of the question (line 59) and repairs the utterance by replacing 'reports' with 'issues'. To produce a repair such as this suggests that the speaker, in this case Andrew, is uncertain whether the listener, Julia, understood the previously used word, as she asks for the question to be repeated (Lerner & Kitzinger, 2007; Schegloff, 1992). This could suggest that Andrew might not consider Julia to be a fully competent member of the project, as she is (seemingly) not able to deploy the relevant lexica. However, we also see that the lack of lexica competence is handled, since Andrew simply repairs his question with a replacement word. Julie is *then* able to answer sensibly, suggesting that she is in fact a competent member in regard to doing the project work, although she might not initially have grasped the meaning of what Andrew said. Thus, both professional terms and demonstrations of knowledge are important interactional resources for displaying and constructing membership of the relevant social context.

As in Excerpt 1, the members perform actions that can be considered situationally as category-bound actions; the members 'report' and the project manager 'assess' and 'questions'. By doing these actions and displaying project-relevant knowledge, they are *doing being* professionals (Goodwin, 1994; Sacks, 1984), and they are more specifically doing being a *specific* type of professionals, namely project team members and project managers.

These two excerpts give the first indications of how social order is produced and maintained in projects and how the actors make sense of the work as manageable and as expected to be talked about; thereby, they are producing the work situation as orderly (not confusing or difficult to handle) and as ordinary. The analysis makes it clear that project actors use professional terms actively to accomplish their work talk and that these terms at the same time function as membership categorization predicates in the sense that knowledge about what the terms infer indexes specific project team categories (Whittle et al., 2014). Whittle et al. note that 'certain category predicates – such as activities, attributes, rights, responsibilities or knowledge-claims − are viewed as "properly" associated with particular categories' (2014, p. 379), and thus to competently use the terms can in that sense be seen as category predicates. It is understood within EMCA that categories are part of membership categorization devices that provide us with an *inferential apparatus* (Sacks, 1995) that entails 'the ability to "interpret", "read" or "recognize" an action or utterance' (Whittle et al., 2014, p. 383). The use of terms is thus a part of producing the situated interaction as a professional talk and the members as part of the collection 'project team', thereby establishing the social and categorical order.

In their talk, it is evident that there are different kinds of knowledge at play: Some knowledge is 'new information' that needs to be passed on to the others, whereas other knowledge is 'implicit' or referential, (e.g. the use of terms). Expressions of the latter kind of knowledge show that the members take for granted that the others, qua their membership of the collection, understand and share the same knowledge. The membership implies that they have epistemic rights (Heritage, 2013) to having and receiving specific knowledge, but they also have obligations to obtain and make use of project-relevant knowledge. In that sense, the social order enables them to unproblematically coordinate actions and situationally creates a sense of predictability and stability in terms of how to accomplish the activity. This in turn contributes to constructing order in terms of how to manage the work.

In terms of ordinariness, the use of terms and the setting seem to be treated as ordinary by the actors. It is clear that the actors in both excerpts understand their organizational context and the in situ activity (and connection between the two) and know what to do and how to do it. Through their actions, they are essentially doing being ordinary (Sacks, 1984) in that context and they are producing a mutual understanding of 'what we are doing' and 'what is going on' as ordinary.

6.2.2 Contextual and stakeholder knowledge

We will now explore two excerpts that demonstrate that specific kinds of knowledge are important resources for enabling actors to talk about and do their project work in situ in a meaningful way and for constituting the project team as such.

6.2.2.1 *Excerpt 3: 'I have been talking with Brian'*

The third excerpt is from the same meeting as Excerpt 2. In the meeting is the project manager Andrew (AN) and the team members Benjamin (BE), Merian (ME), Julie (JU), Pernille (PE), and Sebastian (SE). On the phone is the team member Julia (JU). In this excerpt, it is relevant to notice the reference to other persons and how it is understood by others.

Excerpt 3

40 JU: let me check ↑that

41 BE: {looks from phone to his PC}
42 JU: because i have been talking wi- with brian and we have decided at a
43 certain point that eh do
44 AN: {gazes around the room}
45 JU: the((unintelligible)) already in the production↘
46 BE: {nods}
47 JU: so: [°let me let me°]
48 AN: [yeah]
49 BE: {nods and looks at AN}
50 AN: {looks at BE}
51 BE: [°yeah°]
52 AN: [yeah] let us not waste time on testing then
53

In this excerpt, knowledge about and relations to stakeholders are used to demonstrate one's work on the project and subsequently produce membership of the project team.

In line 40, Julia appoints herself as relevant in relation to the task 'check that' (line 40) and she accounts for her relevance by referencing conversations with 'Brian' (line 42). An account is a way of giving reasons for actions such as assessments (Perakyla, 1998). By referring to stakeholders relevant in relation to the task, Julia accounts and demonstrates a previous engagement with the task and subsequently first-hand knowledge, what Pomerantz (1980) has called *Type 1 knowables*. Julia states that she and Brian have made a decision and thus displays entitlement in relation to this specific task. By their nods (only visible to those in the room) and minimal responses (lines 46, 48, 49, 51, 52), the other actors claim understanding of what she is explaining and seemingly affirm the decision and her ownership of the tasks (Mondada, 2011; Stivers, 2008).

Julia does not explicate who Brian is, suggesting that she takes for granted that the others know who he is and why he is relevant to mention at this point in the talk. Consequently, it does not appear to be an option *not* to know, and the team members do not question who Brian is; they do not display *non*-knowledge, rather they claim understanding. This allows both the observer and the members to assume that the members are 'in the know' and share contextual knowledge, or at least that they want to display that they know. In this setting, non-actions can thus also be seen as constructions of membership. Only Andrew actively demonstrates that he understands what Julia is talking about; he concludes that they should 'not waste time on testing then' (line 52). This type of action is referred to as *re-refencing* (Heritage, 2009), which is a method of demonstrating understanding of what was said (Sacks, 1995). The 'then' is important here, as it indicates that Andrew has understood and can place the information in context, and also that the information has consequences for how they are going to proceed; considering Julie's utterance, things have been altered and testing is no longer relevant.

In the next excerpt, we again see that the mentioning of names and places can be displays of project membership and knowledge.

6.2.2.2 *Excerpt 4: 'waiting for Simon and Christian'*

The following is from the same meeting as Excerpt 1. Jonathan (JO) is the project manager and the others are team members: Janus (JA), Rasmus (RA), Michael (MI), Christian (CH), and, finally, Janus (JA), who participates via the phone. Again, it is relevant to pay attention to the references to persons as well as places.

Excerpt 4

83	JO:	.t vi venter lidt på simon og: chris[tian:] >den anden christian< fordi
84		**.t we are waiting for simon and: chris[tian:] >the other christian< cause**
85	MI:	[(h)]
86		**[(h)]**
87	JO:	de: er på vej tilbage fra sofiesgade .h (0.5) så [jeg er] ret sikker
88		**they: are on their way back from sofiesgade .h (0.5) so [im] quite sure**
89	JA:	[okay]
90		**[okay]**
91	JO:	at de kan cykle super stærkt ehm men så kan jeg måske starte med kigge på
92		**that they can bike super fast ehm but then perhaps i can start with what you**
93		hvad I har lagt ind
94		**have put in**

Here, we again see how unproblematically referential knowledge is used and expected to be understood.

The project manager Jonathan explains that they are waiting for 'Simon and Christian' (line 84), who will also join the meeting as soon as they arrive at the office. He provides the detail that they are on the way back from 'Sofiesgade' (line 88). By explaining this, Jonathan makes his presuppositions observable; firstly, we see that he assumes he has information that the others do not have. This is likely qua his institutional role as project manager, which obligates him to have knowledge about the team's whereabouts and activities. Secondly, we learn that Jonathan takes for granted that the others know who Simon and Christian are, what and where Sofiesgade is, and perhaps even why they were there. This taken-for-granted nature of the knowledge is seemingly confirmed by the team members, as they appear to claim understanding through minimal responses and align with his conclusion that they are waiting for the two remaining meeting participants. This knowledge can be seen as a display of (what should be) 'project membership knowledge'; that is, knowledge that the team is assumed to have due to their membership of, current work on, and experience with the project. To not explain references is actually common practice; Heritage (2009) notes

that talk can display the *maxim of minimization*, a feature noted by Levinson (1987), that favours 'implicit over explicit methods of accomplishing conversational tasks' (Heritage, 2009, p. 259), suggesting that the speaker utters what is *minimally* necessary. If more is said, more information is by the speaker assumed to be necessary for the other to be able to understand; in that, following the maxim of minimization, we as observer can observe what the actors take for granted or orient to as 'known' and what is treated a (presumably) unknow. Thus, 'minimal' references, such as those in this excerpt, can be understood as a way of categorizing the listeners as 'in the know' and as having relevant project knowledge.

Excerpts 3 and 4 show that the actors produce membership of the project through references to specific people and places. This is produced as mutual 'project knowledge', and the members take for granted that other members share the same knowledge and can make sense of it. It is a resource for establishing intersubjectivity: The actors display an awareness towards obligations and responsibilities to share knowledge in order to establish mutual intelligibility (e.g. knowledge is here made available to the others through the explanations). In general, through meeting talk, knowledge becomes 'public and witnessable, to participants and analysts alike' (Llewellyn, 2010, p. 76). As members of the project, they all have specific epistemic rights and obligations (Heritage, 2013) with regard to project knowledge, but there are also differences due to formal, institutional roles and authority, e.g. the project manager has relatively higher epistemic status and authority due to his access to specific knowledge territories (Heritage, 2012). As Heritage notes that epistemic status 'tend[s] to vary from domain to domain, as well as over time, and can be altered from moment to moment as a result of specific interactional contributions' (2012, p. 4). These differences are made apparent in the asymmetry of the interactional organization (Heritage & Clayman, 2010) and the project manager is here positioned as (relatively) more knowledgeable than the team members in regard to this topic; however, in regard to other types of information, others might have a relatively higher status.

In the excerpts, it is likewise evident how taken-for-granted knowledge is both connected to being part of the team and for doing the project work. The members show that they are 'in the know' and perform interactional work to include others in this 'know'. The explicit and implicit displays of membership and talk about 'what we all know' contributes to constituting the situations as ordinary and contributes to the orderliness of the project in situ.

6.2.3 Material resources

In Excerpt 5 and 6, we explore instances where materials are used by project actors and what effect the use of materials has on the ongoing interaction as well as on the construction of order and ordinariness.

6.2.3.1 *Excerpt 5: i will just create another card'*

The next excerpt is from a virtual team meeting, a conference call with a shared screen. Three participants are located together in Denmark: the project manager Adam (AD) and the team members Chang (CH) and Hans (HA). They are sitting at their desks and are using their phones to connect to the conference call. Also participating in the call is Daniel (DA), located in the UK.

On the shared screen, the team can see the project Kanban board,[10] a workflow tool visualizing the overall and individual activities. Picture 1 has been included to illustrate the virtual meeting space and give an impression of how it is organized with different cards. Due to the anonymity of the project actors, I have not included the list of names that would otherwise be visible to the right on the screen.

The excerpt is from the middle of the meeting. In this meeting, the shared screen and cursor are controlled by Adam, and it is particularly important to notice the cursor movements.

Picture 1

Excerpt 5

[10] A Kanban board is a workflow visualization tool that displays project status, progress, and issues, and illustrates who is working on what tasks. Physical Kanban boards typically use Post-it notes on whiteboards or large posters, while online boards replicate this virtually. The Kanban meeting was developed by Toyota in the 1960s as part of the management concept Lean (Pham & Pham, 2013) and is today often used in agile software development. Kanban meetings are conceptualized as short, daily meetings in which the participants list what they accomplished the day before, what they are to do that day, and what challenges they have. In practice, the unfolding of these meetings differs.

16 CH: that that is my plan i will just create another card about one to one
17 (1.0)
18 AD: {curser moves to list of names and scrolls }
19 ? : yeah
20 CH: that's all from me
21 AD: {curser moves to james on the list and his cards become visible on
22 the screen}
23 AD: oh we don't have james
24 AD: {curser moves back to name list and hans is marked}
25 AD: he is in another meeting (.)
26 {hans's cards appear}
27 WI: hans
28 (4.0)
29 HA: yes so firstly
30

In this excerpt, the unproblematic use of the virtual meeting tool suggests a familiarity with the activity, and the tool is used actively to organize the interaction. Adam and the other participants display understanding and competence with regard to the virtual tool.

The excerpt begins in middle of Chang's turn. During Chang's turn, before he finishes, Adam initiates the processes of selecting a next-speaker by moving the cursor to the list of names and scrolling (line 18). This movement signals to Chang that his turn is coming to an end while at the same time making the others aware that a next-speaker is about to be selected. With the cursor, Adam selects a name on the list on the board ('James', line 21), thereby without verbal utterance he appoints that person as next-speaker. At this point, Adam displays that he remembers that James is not in the meeting; this is accomplished through the 'oh'-prefaced turn in line 23. 'Oh' is a change-of-state token that suggests that the talk (or action of selecting James) has occasioned a review of understandings and possibly that new (or in this instance recalled) knowledge has been acquired (Heritage, 1998, 2010). Thus, through the 'oh', Adam 'displays a "remembering" of the grounds invoked' (Heritage, 1998, p. 303).

Upon this, Adam uses the cursor to deselect James's name from the list, marking that he will not be speaking, and the cursor then continues to find and select the next speaker. The selection of a next-speaker happens with minimal talk; simply the visual selection of Hans' name, the appearance of his activity board, and the mentioning of his name appoints him as next-speaker, which he accepts (line 29). In face-to-face meetings, it is common that the mentioning of a name functions as next-speaker appointment, often in coordination with embodied selection through gaze or pointing (Mondada, 2007a). In this virtual meeting, the cursor is virtually pointing to something on the screen (a list of names), but thereby it is also pointing at people and thus preparing them for and inviting them to take the turn. The virtual tool thus functions as an extension of Adam's bodily movements; the cursor movements here embody and make visible the speaker-selection activity. In a way, the virtual tool here has the same function as agendas often do, in that these are

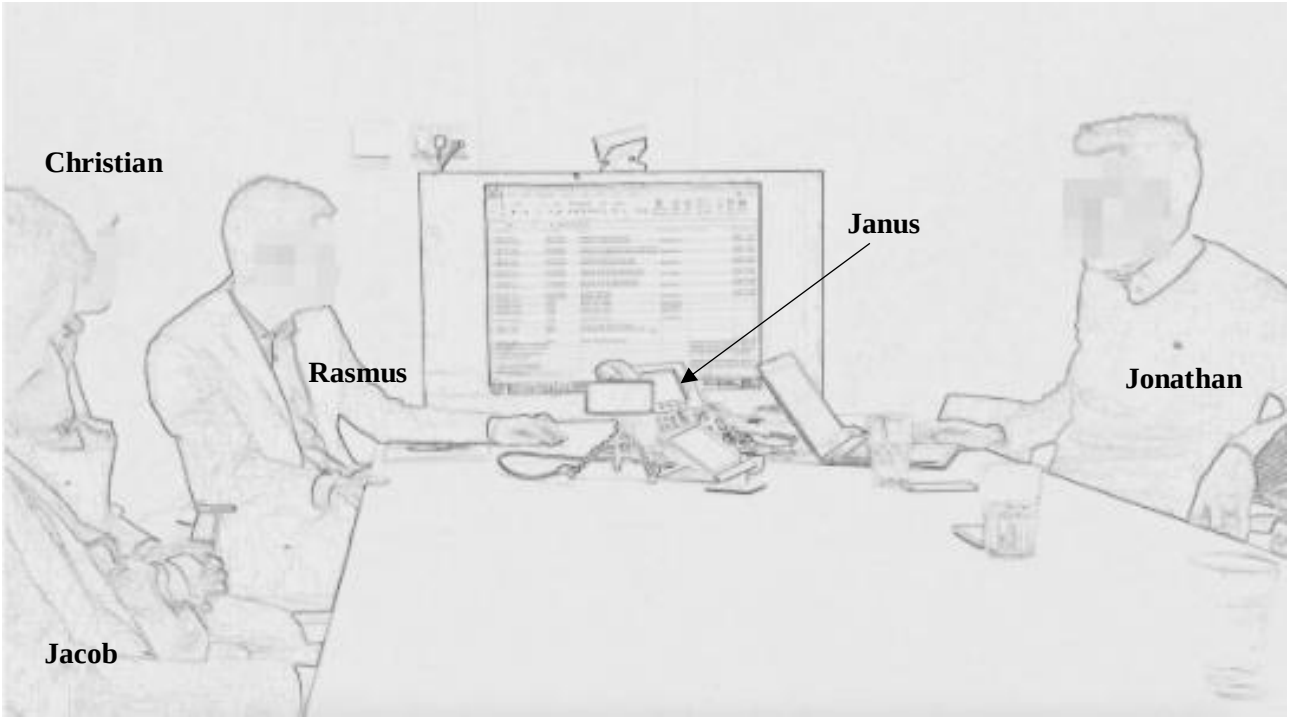
resources used by the actors to accomplish the situational transition between topics and speakers (Deppermann et al., 2010).

The interaction and the visualization of the board make it evident that the virtual material is being used as a resource to organize the ongoing work and make it manageable. Through the talk and embodied actions ('create another card', line 16), the actors clearly make their work activities available to the others, thereby making organization and coordination easier. Also, the clear division of roles, which we also saw in the previous excerpts, is made even more distinct due to differences in access to material resource. We see here how the meeting chair is visibly influential, since he is the one using the cursor to choose speakers and, consequently, what the others see on the screen. At the same time, he is very exposed, since mistakes (e.g. selecting a person who is not present, lines 21–23) are immediately visible to all. The team members on the other hand do not have the access to control the tool, but they competently contribute to the ongoing activity: When selected as speakers, the members show that they understand what is expected of them in the situation without further information being necessary. Thus, the material assists in the ordering of the ongoing interaction and the ordering of the work itself.

The actors' understanding of situationally relevant actions, and the unproblematic use of virtual resources, displays familiarity with the situation and produce it as ordinary for these team members. There are no indications that this is the first time they are engaging in this particular type of meeting. None of the participants orient towards actions, the setting, or tools as being out of the ordinary or as new, instead they show competence and understanding of what to do.

6.2.3.2 *Excerpt 6: 'who has written this'*

Excerpt 6 is from the same meeting as Excerpt 1 and 4. Participating in the meeting are the project manager Jonathan (JO) and the team members Jacob (JC), Rasmus (RA), Michael (MI), Christian (CH), and Janus (JA), who participates via the phone. Picture 2 has been included to illustrate the local participants' positioning in the room as well as their orientation towards the shared screen. Michael is not visible in the picture. Again, it is central to notice the on-screen movements and how they influence the ongoing interaction.



Picture 2

Excerpt 6

16		{all are looking at screen}
17	RA:	{smiles, gazes from screen towards end of table and back at screen}
18	JO:	{uses arrows on pc to highlight box in excel spreadsheet on screen}
19	JO:	okay så har vi noget maersk limited ↑her hvem har lagt det ind↗
20		**okay then we have some maersk limited ↑here who has written this↗**
21	JO:	{highlights boxes in the excel spreadsheet on the screen}
22	MI:	hahahaha who [dares]
23		**hahahaha who [dares]**
24	JA:	[det er] mig:
25		**[that is] me:**
26	JO:	det er godt
27		**that is good**

As in Excerpt 5, we here in Excerpt 6 see, how the project manager makes use of material resources to organize the interaction and chair the meeting.

In Excerpt 6, all team members direct their attention towards the shared screen. In line 18, Jonathan selects a topic on the screen by highlighting some cells in the Excel spreadsheet, and he simultaneously asks who is responsible for writing the text (lines 19-20). His question and the cursor movements function as an invitation for the relevant next-speaker to take the turn. As in Excerpt 5, we thus see that the project manager is in an influential position, due to his control of the shared screen in situ, and due to his role *as* project

manager; that is, he orients to having entitlement to request information and select both speakers and topics and is aided by the material resource in doing these actions. The other meeting participants treat this as acceptable; observable as they all align with the unfolding of the activity (orienting their attention to the screen) (J Steensig, 2013) and answer the project manager's question (lines 24-25).

As evident from the talk, the team members have contributed to the content of the spreadsheet (lines 19-20 and 24-25) and they are thus (expected to be) aware of the purpose of the spreadsheet and why it is relevant to talk about in this meeting. Especially for the project manager, the spreadsheet functions as a resource, as it easily allows for him to assess the team members' work. The spreadsheet is thus a material resource used to organize and focus the ongoing talk as well as to review past work and organize future work.

To competently engage in the professional talk in this type of meeting, the members seemingly need to possess professional skills, contextual knowledge about the project and the organization, proficiency of the specific tools, as well as an understanding of how the meetings (should) unfold.

When comparing Excerpt 5 and 6, it is the project managers who control the material resources: The tools are not only resources for chairing the meeting, they also aid the management of ongoing work activities. It seems that epistemic status is connected to and displayed through the coordinated used of materials and talk. Heritage (2012) describes epistemic status as an 'inherently relative and relational concept concerning the relative access to some domain of two (or more) persons at some point in time' (p. 4). Through the talk and resources, the project managers' epistemic statuses are produced as high, relative to the others': The project manager thus displays knowledgeability (Heritage, 2012).

The two excerpts are from a weekly team meeting and a daily update meeting, and in these the materials are used as agendas, in the sense that they help organize the structure of the talk (Boden, 1994) and (re)produce the repetitiveness of these meetings. They contribute to creating situational order. Furthermore, the materials thus act as 'points of focus' and enable individual and mutual knowledge to be shared in an organized manner. In addition, the materials function as both sources of knowledge and invitations to share knowledge about work; the materials require and are used to talk retrospectively about work, to organize the interaction in situ, and to organize actions and work tasks in the future – all actions that require the demonstration of knowledge. The materials are important before, during, and after the meeting. In that way, the materials function as management resources: By being placed in the spreadsheet or on the board, the work becomes tangible, organizable, and thereby manageable.

Additionally, the material in a sense underlines the interdependence and need for accountable actions from the project team members, since it would be visible to all if someone had not contributed to the shared document.

The analysis shows how the material in these settings enables the actors to reflexively organize their talk in situ; that is, the actors reflexively make sense of others' actions in relation to the materials in use and thereby produce sensible next actions – they create an understanding of the activity *during* the activity through reflexive practice (Koschmann, LeBaron, Goodwin, & Feltovich, 2011) and collectively produce the ongoing interaction as a specific type of meeting interaction. This underlines the 'situated nature of understanding' and how understanding is connected to social and organizational contexts as well as 'specific material and spatial environments' (Mondada, 2011, p. 550).

6.3 Analytical Findings

In the beginning of this analytical chapter, a paradox is presented: The project managers experience and frame their work setting as uncertain and challenging, but what we observe is primarily repetition and patterned orderliness in the project settings. The analysis of the interviews and observations suggests that the actors are impacted by the complexity of their work setting, but also that they find ways to handle this competently, without too much difficulty, and thereby accomplish their work. The micro-analysis of the meeting excerpts demonstrates that the actors do not seem challenged by complexity or uncertainty in situated practice; instead, through their talk, they produce mutual understandings of the in situ interaction, the work and the project situation and thereby make the work manageable, rather than difficult to manage, and construct their work as 'nothing special', as recognizable, and thus as ordinary. Thus, the actors produce an orderliness in situ that explains the patterned orderliness that was seen during and in review of the observations. The micro-analysis illustrates the methods with which the actors accomplish this production of orderliness and ordinariness: a range of interactional resources and their membership knowledge. The analytical findings of the efforts to establish order and the situations as ordinary can be taken as orientations towards a need to manage the otherwise disorderly context, that is, the complexity of the setting that create uncertainty for the actors. This will be considered further in the following section.

In this final section, these findings will be considered and we will reflect on the production and function of order and ordinariness in a complex work setting. In particular, the following section will focus on the function of order and ordinariness, the relevance and need for membership knowledge and competences, and, finally, the findings will be considered from a routines perspective.

6.3.1 Function of order and ordinariness

The analysis shows that by using interactional resources, practical reasoning, and reflexively relating to their in situ talk, the members produce a collective understanding of the ongoing meeting activities as *ordinary* and construct *order* in the situation and they are thereby able to handle the complexity of the setting.

That the actors orient towards their work setting as one that needs to be ordered suggests that they find it to be complex and disorderly. The analysis shows how the actors produce the meetings as ordinary and create order, thereby constructing the complex as manageable: There seems to be a pull between ordinariness and complexity in the sense that the complexity of the projects necessitates the production of the ordinary. In addition, it seems that in order to manage the complexity and the subsequent uncertainty in practice, the actors must produce sensemaking, thereby making the complex manageable in the situation. Although much of the reported complexity is dealt with in the meetings (i.e. it is in the meetings that stakeholders are informed and consulted, 'guestimates' are made, etc.), it is also here that the actors construct order and ordinariness. The project actors are seemingly very focused on producing situational order in the meeting interaction and producing order in terms of the work activities, while also constructing the talk in the meeting and the work situation as ordinary; thus, the meetings are here used as spaces in which the actors can create order in terms of sensemaking and work.

Looking across the observations, it is clear that meetings are one of the most common work activities for project actors. Further, in the fine-grained analysis, it becomes apparent that it is within these meetings that the actors talk about and accomplish project work, and in doing so also construct the talk taking place in the meetings as 'work talk'. The meetings are important, as they are constituted and function as spaces to address, discuss, reason about, and (if possible) control some of these complex matters within the settings. In the excerpts, the team members engage in meetings that are relevant for ensuring the information flow in the teams but that also function as spaces for the collective production of meaning (Boden, 1994); that is, these are spaces where members can retrospectively reflect and report on actions, construct mutual understanding of the situation, and can orient towards and make plans for possible futures. The meetings can thus be understood as *occasions for sensemaking* (Weick, 1995) of the past, present, and the future – in other words, spaces for constituting order in terms of mutual intelligibility.

The analysis demonstrates that the identified interactional phenomena functions as sensemaking resources for the actors in these meeting situations. In the talk, work and possible problems are handled by using specific terms in the talk – this both enables the other participants to understand (if they have the required knowledge) and also makes it possible contribute to the work talk as relevant in the ongoing meeting, and thereby actually doing work through talk. Considering the materials used in the meetings, these function as 'centres of attention', assist the organization of the sequential and categorical order, and contribute to the mutual production of intersubjectivity. Previously, Koschman et al. (2011) have shown 'how parties engaged in some form of concerted action coordinate attention to particular features of their material environment' (p.

521) to produce collective understanding, which enables relevant next actions. Likewise, the actors here, by closely coordinating talk and embodied movements, make use of the materials and constitute their situated functionality. Also, the materials in combination with the talk are contributing to the production of the meetings as *those types* of meetings, and consequently as ordinary. This construction of the ordinariness of the meeting happens during the meeting and is maintained as the meeting interaction is performed by the actors drawing on both verbal and material resources, similar to how LeBaron et al. (2016) showed routine meetings to be constructed as such during the interaction. The materials thus allow for the actors to discuss, make sense of, and 'physically' organize the work using their project membership knowledge as well as their professional knowledge

Previously, Boden (1994) has noted that meeting talk in itself is both situational and transsituational, and is at the same time constituted by and constituting the meeting. Similarly, the materials in particular are used to organize actions in situ, but are also, like meeting talk itself, situational and transsituational, as they are continuous points of reference before, during, and after the meetings. The materials are again and again updated and used to constitute order, both in terms of the mutual intelligibility and manageability of the work. In a sense, the materials as well as the repetitive organization of the interactions create a connection between the continuous and the situational.

Thus, the interactional resources allow for the actors to make the complexities of their work setting orderly and manageable; the actors are not only managing the project but are producing the different aspects of the project as manageable, creating an order that would otherwise not be there. This suggests that they orient towards their work setting as one that *needs be ordered*, where it is not possible to progress with the work otherwise, and consequently order is constructed repeatedly in a variety of meetings.

Considering the micro-analytical and the observational findings, it is apparent that constitutive processes of the meetings as specific types of (repetitive) meetings occurs *during* the meetings. In doing so, the actors also produce the meetings as part of their project work activities and produce the repetitiveness or patterns traceable in the observations. Thus the understanding of the meetings as those meetings are thus 'a collective achievement, publicly displayed and interactively oriented to within the production and the monitoring of action' (2011, p. 550). Through (repetitive) meetings, the actors create order as a way to manage 'the uncertain', making the complex manageable, and by repeating the meetings these are made familiar and produced as ordinary; thus, these meetings and the 'ordinary' and 'orderly' talk are thus produced in response to a complex and changeable setting.

6.3.2 Membership

In the meetings, the actors produce mutual understandings of the status of the work and the project, and through their talk they produce a sense of orderliness in the project – that nothing problematic is happening

and that there is no need to be alarmed. To accomplish this, the team demonstrates, uses, and understands membership knowledge.

The analysis suggests that membership is a central aspect in producing order (both in terms of sensemaking and manageability) and ordinariness, as it influences the creation of shared understandings of the present meeting, the project work, and the roles of the other members. Of course, professional knowledge and competence are important for any kind of professional work, but membership knowledge and competence are important for the actors' ability to contribute meaningfully to the ongoing interaction and to construct order and ordinariness in the complex work setting. The interactional phenomena (or resources) can only be produced or used in situationally relevant ways by *competent* members of the project. The analysis demonstrates that to actually accomplish the practical work at hand in the meetings and to contribute to the collective production of order and mutual intelligibility, membership is not enough; rather, the actors need membership knowledge and competences. The analysis finds that the actors through their talk display themselves to be competent members (Garfinkel, 1967); in other words, by engaging meaningfully in practice, the actors' actions betoken 'to others is the possession of a competence' (B. Barnes, 2001, p. 28), and they thereby enact being 'knowing professionals' (Nielsen, Nielsen, Gravengaard, & Due, 2012, p. 1471).

Furthermore, the performance of categories and the unproblematic alignment and ratification of categories produce a social order in the setting. This category work contributes to the observable orderliness by constructing social order in a setting that is treated, at least retrospectively, as disorderly. In that sense, the actors' production of project-relevant categories and their categorizations as competent project members, contribute to the continuous production of social order and subsequently to the (re)construction of the project team.

The analysis also demonstrates that taken-for-granted knowledge is a vital aspect in performing and understanding actions in situ. Taken-for-granted knowledge is in the excerpts 'not in need of explanation' in the situation or for these people, suggesting that this knowledge can be seen as an expression of the (needed) epistemic status of competent members (Raymond & John Heritage, 2006). The analysis shows how the use of taken-for-granted knowledge as well as the performed actions are treated as accountable and relevant, and thereby the actors are seemingly orienting towards this knowledge and these actions as 'ordinary'; that is, they are through their actions *doing being ordinary* within that particular project context.

In sum, the actors' membership competences and knowledge allows for them to construct their talk and meeting activities as ordinary and makes it possible for the teams to talk about and construct order in the (possibly) uncertain context.

6.3.3 Routinization

At this point, it seems relevant to draw on the concept of routines to shine light on the findings of repetitiveness and ordinariness.

Routines are defined as 'repetitive, recognizable patterns of interdependent actions, carried out by multiple actors' (Feldman & Pentland, 2003, p. 95). Drawing on this notion in an ethnomethodological perspective, it needs to be emphasized that routines can only be identified in this way if seemingly treated as such by the members themselves. The analytical findings suggest several indications of routines: for instance, that meetings are the most common work activities for project actors, that specific meetings are repetitive throughout a project lifespan, and that the actors treat these meetings as familiar and construct them as ordinary within the work context. The repetitive, ordinary, routine activities are easily recognized and constructed as such by competent members, and the routinization and familiarity with materials and repeating meeting agendas likely contribute to both the collective sensemaking of what to do in the meeting and how to handle the complexity of their work setting, thereby making the situational project work more efficient. Consequently, the routineness reduces the complexity by reducing uncertainty for the actors in terms of what they are supposed to do and how – they treat the routine activity as ordinary and rely on it to produce order.

These reflections correlate with a number of studies on temporary organizational systems that find that the widespread understanding of projects as inherently unique and uncertain is problematic, since it 'equates project-based activities with non-routine behavior' (Brady & Davies, 2004, p. 1605). In fact, as Brady and Davies note, much of what actually takes place in projects seems somewhat routinized and the projects involve 'repeatable and predictable patterns of activities' (2004, p. 1605). My findings concur with this and the orientations of the actors suggest that they treat the meetings as 'yet another', rather than 'first-time meetings'. The project team members construct 'what the situation is' by doing actions relevant in the meeting; thereby, they produce the meeting to be recognizable for each other as *that kind* of meeting. This creates a continuity in a setting that is otherwise often described and reportedly experienced as changeable.

The analysed interactional phenomena tools are practical resources in the management of the project, and the unproblematic use of the tools contributes to the production of the setting and activity as 'ordinary' and can be understood as producing the meetings as routine. In that sense, ordinariness can be coupled to the concept of routines; that is, routines are patterns of repetitive activities or actions that we treat as ordinary in that particular context. Furthermore, considering the concept of routines in relation to the finding that the actors in these meetings establish a sense of order and thereby make the complex work setting manageable, it seems that the actors in fact construct the activity of 'making the complex manageable' as a routine.

By producing the repetitive, routine meetings as ordinary and orderly, the actors become able to focus on what is 'important' for the work at hand, rather than on how to interact; thus, in practice, the routine meetings reduce the complexity for the project actors.

6.3.4 Final remarks

In sum, by examining meeting interactions in practice, we see that complexity is tackled as a practical issue and not as a barrier for doing the work. Contrary to what one would expect, due to previous theoretical conceptualizations of projects as complex and despite uncertainty being expressed in the interviews, the project actors do not have trouble managing their work in situ. Instead, through resources and the meeting situations order is established.

The meetings are produced as recognizable spaces for talking about, making sense of, and thereby controlling what is taking place in the project and its environment. Using their membership knowledge and competences, the actors reason about the complex work setting that they continuously navigate in and create order in terms of sensemaking and organization of work. Thus, the analysis demonstrates that the production of order is central for the actual accomplishment of the project work – both in situ and beyond and it seems that is becomes ordinary for these actors to continuously manage the complexity of the setting.

Taking this as a foundation, the next analyses will shift from looking at orderly situations to disorderly events and the complexity of project relations. Thus, we still have left to explore 1) project situations in which the actors manage unexpected events (i.e. episodes where the complexity of the setting materializes as problems in the project) and 2) how the actors orient to and manage relational ambiguity in the complex settings (i.e. how belonging is constructed in projects that involve many different actors from different organizational units). These aspects will be explored in the following analytical sections.

Finally, before we move on to Analysis 2, I want to connect the findings above to reflections on my own role as an industrial PhD student. For although my research project varies significantly from the projects of this study, the findings of situated constructions of order as a response to complexity are quite relatable. When this PhD project was initiated, I felt a great deal of uncertainty with regard to research process, outcome, and contributions. Also, navigating in and understanding both the practices of the MLIT organization as well as the complex academic terrains my project touched upon was and continued to be challenging. Similarly to the practices of the actors in the above analysis, I see now in retrospect that I spend a great deal of time constructing a sense of order. This order was in terms of organizing what to do on a day-to-day basis as well as continuously trying to figure out what this study, and ultimately the dissertation, should be about, how it should be structured, and what the contributions would be. Retrospectively, I can see that situated order was created repeatedly through materials such as project plans and discussions in meetings with supervisors. However, the order was also constantly challenged, because as soon as I started doing the work that I had just organized and made sense of, new complexities and uncertainties emerged, necessitating me to construct new order.

Thus, I can retrospectively see that I experienced and treated the work of the PhD project as complex, qua my constant need and effort to organize, plan, and re-evaluate, and that it was the situationally produced experiences of order that enabled me to make decisions and move forward. It is not until now, after having written an analysis on others' complex work settings and experiences of uncertainty, that this has actually become apparent to me.

7 Analysis 2: Managing the Unexpected

The first analytical chapter demonstrated that project actors are influenced by complexity. However, we have yet to explore how actors orient to and handle situations where *unexpected events* occurs, events that previous studies have shown occur due to the inherent uncertainty of complex project environments (section 2.3.2). Looking at the empirical material of this study, this analysis will explore the situated management of such unexpected events. In particular, we will examine how project actors come to understand unexpected events as such, how they orient towards various kinds of unexpected events, and how they establish intersubjectivity and organize actions despite general and situational uncertainty.

This analytical chapter aims to contribute to answering to the central research question by exploring the following questions:

3. In complex projects, how do project actors handle instances of unexpectedness?
4. In complex projects, how do project actors situationally achieve sensemaking and organization of action in unexpected situations?

The chapter is structured as follows: Firstly, we will look at an example from the observational data that demonstrates that project actors in practice deal with problems that occur due to environmental complexity. Secondly, by analysing the interaction in fragments from two team meetings, we explore how actors make sense of different kinds of unexpected events, findings that the actors treat some unexpectedness as ordinary and somewhat expected, whereas other unexpectedness is treated as completely unexpected and extraordinary.

The analysis demonstrates that intersubjectivity is vital when encountering unexpectedness and that actors, through resources such as routine meetings and membership knowledge can contain and make sense of the unexpected as well as identify relevant actions in response to the unexpected events.

7.1 Observing Unexpected Episodes

In the following, examples from the observational material will make clear that unexpected events of varying size and complexity are an observable and seemingly common aspect of project work.

In general, the study's observations of and interviews with project actors inform us that within the projects unexpected events do occur. Furthermore, I have, qua my role as insider, experienced several unexpected incidents that impacted the work in the organization. The unexpected events within the projects

vary from small, unpredictable issues in the ongoing work to major disruptions that negatively affect the entire project and impact the organizational environment. Although varying in terms of impact, it seems that all types of unexpected events have some sort of impact on the projects and significance for the work going on. To avoid these unexpected events, the project teams, and in particular the project managers, take many precautions and perform pre-emptive actions such as risk management, continuous stakeholder involvement, and frequently re-evaluate plans (as learned from the interviews). However, as the following makes evident, unexpected events do occur despite these measures.

Before going further, I find it relevant to note that, qua the study's ethnomethodological framework, categorizations of unexpected events as such as well as the severity these are of course founded on the members' own categorizations.

7.1.1 High-uncertainty, high-level stakeholders

One of the project managers observed was Lasse, who is located in Denmark and manages an internal software development project, which is part of a high-priority programme (Observation: Lasse). On the first day of observing Lasse, he informs me that he has just learnt that the launch of the programme has been delayed for at least 3 weeks. He explains that the cause is a technical challenge with the newly developed IT system that he and his team are partly responsible for. He also informs me that they now need to estimate how this delay impacts the timeline, customer, etc.

Throughout the day, I observe as Lasse and the programme manager, Anne, who Lasse reports to, coordinate with each other and with IT and business stakeholders. They participate in meetings and generally attempt to assess how the delay impacts the organization, what actions are required, and what needs to be communicated to who, when, and how. For instance, I observe a talk between the programme and project manager: She informs him of the changes to the 'rollout plan', a plan that outlines when different activities will take place in different locations. They are discussing when to initiate the different activities and decide to postpone most activities with regard to rollout (e.g. training of sales people) for a month. Thus, the reach of the unexpected problem appears to be substantial, as the delay impacts activities in a large number of departments worldwide. The impact and extent of the problem becomes evident in a meeting with other stakeholders, as they decide that additional resources from other projects and organizational units should be mobilized to help in the problem-solving process. The project is seemingly treated as high-priority, since this mobilization implies the relocation of resources from other projects, which will delay these projects and necessitate them to re-plan project activities. It is thus clear that the project is not isolated but greatly interconnected with the project environment.

This suggests that in organizations such as this, project actors need to have an understanding of the responsibilities, aims, and interests of different stakeholders. The observations make it evident that it is not

simple to achieve agreement on and approval of response actions; rather, this requires extensive discussions and negotiations. Several of the meetings throughout the day became quite heated as stakeholders argued about responsibilities and resources. It seems very important that 'the right people' are involved in the decision making at the right time; not only due to organizational hierarchy but also because the actors have access to different *territories of knowledge* (Heritage, 2012).

The project manager and programme manager are thus both navigating in situational uncertainty and in a complex network of 'political' stakeholders. Even though there appear to be many uncertainties in this situation, and aspects they do not yet have the full overview of, the project manager, programme manager, and the other stakeholders collaborate to get some response activities initiated. They seem to be able to navigate in the uncertainty by relying on experience, context-specific and membership knowledge, and practical reasoning about the situation (Garfinkel, 1967). They focus on finding a balance between *responsiveness* and *distinctiveness* (Hällgren & Söderholm, 2010), thus between responding quickly and acquiring enough information to produce 'accurate' response actions. In that way, the organization of action is made possible even though they do not have the 'full picture'.

Sometime after the observation, I learnt that the system had been launched successfully after some delay but did not function as hoped, causing even more attention, resources, and time to be directed towards it. The observation of this extremely disruptive deviation shows that despite intense planning, control, and collaboration, major deviations can occur, and they can have extensive consequences for the projects and the organizational environment and require the immediate involvement of a range of stakeholders, both those directly impacted by the events and those necessitated to solve the problem. Furthermore, the observation indicates the interrelatedness and interdependence of projects and environment. Deviation can set chain reactions in motion, especially when projects are tightly coupled (Kimble, 2011; Orton & Weick, 1990) or when complex tasks in projects are sequentially organized (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002).

The example above is one of several instances of project actors dealing with episodes of unexpectedness. The observations in general, as well as this particular example, indicate that variables such as the source of the unexpectedness (external or internal), impact on the project and its environment, current state of resources and other pending tasks, relations to stakeholders, criticality, time, and dependencies, etc. influence the way in which the actors deal with deviations. However, *how* the actors *in situ* make sense of and produce collective categorizations of deviations, how they together construct understandings of what the unexpected events comprise of, and how they organize and collaborate to achieve action is not evident from an exploration of the observational notes. To understand the situated practices of handling unexpected events and to understand how project actors situationally make sense of these events and organize actions in response, we need to explore talk-in-interaction in situations where unexpected events have occurred and are talked about.

7.2 Micro-Analysis: Managing Unexpected Events

As we now move on to a fine-grained analysis of meeting fragments, we will explore the in situ management of unexpectedness. The analysis will focus on how collective constructions of meanings occur, and how these impact actors' organization of action in the midst of (possible) uncertainty. The analysis will attend to interactions in two team meetings and, through a micro-analysis, will examine what actually takes place in situations impacted by unexpectedness.

The analytical approach is, as outlined in the methodology chapter, founded on the principles of ethnomethodology and the analytical apparatus of CA. As is common for CA studies within organizational research (Clifton, 2014; Larsson & Lundholm, 2013), I will provide observational context and briefly introduce the project situation before the micro-analyses. In doing so, I will thus draw on the observational material collected at the same time as the recordings of the meetings. I find that the micro-analyses provide rich, deeply grounded findings, but that these, in this type of study, are further qualified and made relevant by being placed in context.

The analysis is divided into two sections that will focus on one fragment from one meeting each. For the ease of the reader and the progression of the analysis, the fragments have been divided into smaller excerpts, and only relevant lines have been included (relevant in terms of the readers' understanding of the interaction and to ensure the validity of the analysis and findings). The sections explore two very different types of unexpected events, oriented to as unexpected by the members in situ.

7.2.1 Meeting 1: Containing uncertainty

Meeting 1 illustrates specific kinds of unexpected events, namely those that are treated as expected unexpected. Looking at a meeting fragment, we explore how actors in situ make use of membership knowledge, materials, experiences, and categorization work as resources in a collective sensemaking process. These findings suggest that project actors can routinize the management of some types of unexpectedness.

This meeting was selected amongst other possible examples because this team seems especially organized in their management of the unexpected, as the following analysis will make evident.

7.2.1.1 *The project and actors*

The project team in focus was working on a project, DigitalWork, and were to develop a complex website for an internal 'customer', a member of the larger organizational group (Observation: Jack). The project was initiated 3 years before the data collection and was at this time moving towards the implementation phase.

The project team was led by the senior project manager, Jack, who reported to the programme manager, Simon. Jack and Simon, as well as one team member, were primarily located in the UK, whereas the rest of the team, consisting of seven internal team members at that time, was located in Denmark. However, both Jack and Simon frequently travelled to Denmark, in some periods every second week, to meet with stakeholders and have face-to-face time with the team. Furthermore, the project involved a vendor organization, and approximately five vendor employees located in India were working full-time on the project. The vendor had one representative, a vendor team manager, located with the majority of the team in Denmark for a period of 3 months. This happened to occur at the same time as the observations. This co-location of a vendor representative is not standard practice for all projects; however, it does regularly occur in large projects.

The team was observed for 2 days when the project manager, Jack, was present in the office in Denmark. During the observations, the project manager was nearly constantly in meetings with customers, vendors, representatives from interrelated project, project team members, etc. In these meetings, the talk often revolved around planning, coordination, negotiation of responsibilities, and discussion of different contingencies. A total of 11 meetings were recorded over the course of these 2 days.

Throughout the observations, it appeared as if the project manager was the primary point of information, constantly seeking it and providing it to relevant stakeholders. The project team members and the manager continuously discussed the progress of different project elements, and the team members reported to the manager when problems occurred. The project actors seemed to continuously deal with many different issues, and much of the project manager's work was centred on discussing issues, their solutions, and possible impact. It seemed that in these talks, the project manager and team were in part performing daily work and in part managing and mitigating risks. Despite the constant flow of information and dealing with occurring problems, there seemed to be no major disruptions to the work. Rather, as will be evident from the analysis of the fragment, the project actors appeared to treat the unexpected events or issues occurring as minor and the handling of these as an ordinary part of their project work.

7.2.1.2 *The meeting*

The selected fragment is from one of the DigitalWork project team's daily stand-up meetings, which take place every morning at 09.30 CET. Present in the meeting is the project manager Jack (JA), the project coordinator Martin (MA), the test manager Joslin (JO), the vendor team manager Raymond (RA), the team members Michael (MI) and Tom (TO), as well as three other local members who do not speak in the fragment. Two participants are calling in: the programme manager Simon and the UK-based team member Henry. The phone is placed in the middle of the meeting room next to the computer.

The meeting was recorded with video and audio, but due to the limited space in the room, the video was not able to capture all of those present, and some of the actors move in and out of the video recording. All sound was captured and the two types of data have supplemented each other in the transcription process.

In the meeting, the project team is using a Kanban board to keep an overview of the different ongoing project activities and the individual tasks. In the room, the 'board' consists of Post-it notes on posters (Picture 4 and 5) and they also update a virtual replica (Picture 6) that is available online (the same type of virtual board as used by the team in Excerpt 5, Chapter 6). Using the board as starting point, the project team discuss progress and problems relating to their work, and the Post-it notes are actively used during the meeting. The virtual version is updated after the meeting.

The fragment was selected for analysis because the actors at this point in the meeting discuss unexpected events, and through their talk and use of the board they make sense of the issues and organize response actions. The fragment has been divided into three excerpts.

Picture 3

Picture 4

Picture 5

Picture 6

The first excerpt is from the very beginning of the daily meeting. Up until this point, the participants have been preparing for the meeting and engaging in pre-meeting small talk (Mirivel & Tracy, 2005). Now, the actors begin to talk about unexpected issues that have occurred since their last meeting and whether these issues should be added to the so-called 'block list' on the Kanban board.

7.2.1.3 *Excerpt 7: 'The block list is empty right now'*

Excerpt 7 illustrates the first instance of how actors produce categorizations of problems *as* problems and simultaneously, through the design of their turns, make the categorizations available and recognizable as such to the others. Furthermore, the excerpt shows how materials function as resources in the collective sensemaking process and are used to produce issues as manageable.

As the meeting begins, a team member reports on an issue that has occurred. The issue is then talked about and responsibilities are assigned. Here, it is interesting to notice which actions are performed by who, and how they design their turns as this has implications for the production of situationally relevant categories.

Excerpt 7

1	JA:	good↓ should we start↗
2	JO:	{looks at MA}
3	MA:	sure thing (0.5) eh the block list is empty right now↗
4	JO:	ehm i have (.) t s t human binder is not working↘
5	MA:	{clicks pen}
6	MA:	i'll put that up
7		(0.7)
8	JO:	{looks at JA}
9	JA:	who needs to look at it↗
10	JO:	e:h offshore team has raised the issue to: rescue team but so far no feedback
11		yet

12 JO: {looks at RA}
13 JA: {looks at RA}
14 JA: can we follow up on that↗ (.) (cool)

The excerpt shows the first instance of the team members talking about an issue as unexpected and at the same time manageable – they treat it as something they had *not* predicted, but through categorizations and use of the board they produce intersubjectivity and organize actions to address the issue.

Jack opens the meeting by using the topic transition marker 'good' (line 1) (Asmuß & Svennevig, 2009), and by asking a question, first-pair-part (FPP). The opening of a meeting directs the participants' orientation to the topic or work at hand and introduces a specific interactional order associated with meetings (Boden, 1994). The interactional order relevant in this meeting is, as the following interaction makes evident, familiar for these meeting participants.

Jack's question is directed at Martin, indicated by him taking the turn, and it functions as a 'go-ahead' for him to open the first topic, which he promptly does. Martin delivers the second-pair-part, the answer 'sure thing', and then directs the participants' attention to the first activity in the meeting by stating the status of 'the block list' (line 3). The statement functions as a topic opener; by mentioning the board is empty 'right now', Martin produces it as a space to be filled, and this prompts Joslin to take the turn. This indicates that the actors have a pre-knowledge about the activity, including materials, expectations, relevant actions, etc. Here, it is apparent that the materiality of the Kanban board provides a range of affordances (J. J. Gibson, 2015; LeBaron, 2008) in terms of organization, in the sense that it enables the actors to organize their interaction, align actions in situ, and organize work activities to be accomplished after the meeting.

As Joslin takes the turn, she informs Martin and the rest of the participants about something that has occurred ('human binder is not working', line 4). By mentioning the specific event here, she actively categorizes it as being relevant for the block list. Martin treats her turn as both sequentially and contextually relevant and seems to ratify her categorization of the matter as he says, 'I'll put that up', thereby verbalizing his bodily action of writing on a Post-it note and placing it on the block list on the wall. Here, it is observable how categories are in fact ratified (and accepted) through next-turn proof procedure (Sacks et al., 1974); that is, the first speaker's use of a category is treated by the next speaker as the same category, thereby the collective categorization is produced in the second turn.

Upon this, Jack takes the turn again and directs a follow-up question to Joslin, eliciting information about who are responsible for solving the problem (line 9). Through this action, Jack is thus adding to the categorization of the matter as something that needs to be 'looked at'. This indicates that 'blockers' require some sort of attention or action. Neither Jack nor Martin display surprise by the report of the event and appear to understand what is meant by 'human binder', etc. Thus, this appears to be a display of shared, membership knowledge. However, despite an awareness of what the problem is and what it is related to, they

do not treat it as expected or as reoccurring. On the contrary, Jack's question about who needs to look at it seems to suggest that he is not familiar with the particular problem.

After a brief hesitation, Joslin answers Jack's question and provides the information requested by replying that she has informed the 'rescue team' (line 9) (which is the vendor team offshored in India), and adds that she has not heard back from them yet (lines10–11). In a single talking turn, she 1) provides the required information about 'who needs to look at it', 2) accounts for why the problem has not been solved yet, 3) lets him know she has taken action, and 4) places the responsibility somewhere else. In a sense, it seems that by reporting and explaining the issue she can relinquish responsibility and produce the issues as something that concerns the collective and not just her.

In Joslin's turn, the categorization of blocker is further expanded, since she refers to it as 'the issue'; not only does the incident belong on the block list, it is an issue. This, combined with Jack's orientation towards assigning responsibility, shows us as observers that issues on the block list are problematic and need to be attended to and resolved. Here, the issue is categorized as relevant in relation to the rescue team. The exchange about responsibility indicates that blockers are not always the responsibility of the rescue team, suggesting that other blockers may be the responsibility of other actors.

The mentioning of the rescue team prompts Jack and Joslin to look at Raymond (lines 12–13), thereby identifying him as relevant in relation to the resolution of the issue or to the rescue team and making it clear to everyone that 'rescue team' is connected to the vendor. Raymond gives no audible response to Jack's request (line 14), and we are not able to see any bodily response (nods or otherwise) due to the angle of the camera and Jack, who at this point blocks visual access to Raymond. However, since Jack, after a brief pause, concludes the interaction with a 'cool' (line 14), it seems likely that he receives some sort of non-verbal acceptance from Raymond (e.g. a nod). The acceptance is later verbally confirmed (as will be evident in the next fragment).

In this excerpt, categorizations are made without any interactional problems or need for discussions. The actors are able to reach the categorizations by drawing on membership knowledge and practical reasoning; using this, they make sense of what the issue is and for whom it is relevant. As Hester and Eglin (1997) explain, actors use categorizations and contextual knowledge in a reflexive manner: The in situ categorization and the members' knowledge of (local and general) context 'comprise a reflexively constituted relational configuration' (Stephen Hester & Eglin, 1997, p. 31) through which collective sensemaking of 'what is going on' here and now and in regard to the *issue* is produced. Thus, sensemaking is to be understood as occurring on several 'levels': the ongoing interaction (what are we doing), the content of the talk (what are we talking about), and the context of the talk.

The actors orient towards the issue as unexpected, indicated by the need to sort out responsibilities and by the fact that none of the actors treat the issue as a repetitive occurrence or refer to prior talk about the issue,

although they do claim understanding of what the issue is. In that sense, the issue is oriented to as something unpredicted that has emerged from the work.

Here, it is also interesting to note that the team orient towards the settings as familiar both in terms of performance of roles and in terms of interactional order. Through their actions and orientations towards sequentially relevant actions, the team members display alignment with the interactional order and facilitate the unfolding of the meeting activity (Jakob Steensig, 2012). Furthermore, the team members orient towards the talk about unpredicted issues as expected; they orient towards each other's situational actions as expected, accountable, and relevant in *this* situation. Combining this with the unproblematic accomplishment of sequential order and coordination of actions, it seems that this is not the first time they have engaged in this activity or the first time they have talked about unexpected issues. They seem to orient towards their actions as *doing being ordinary* (Sacks, 1984), and we thus get the indication that this is treated as a familiar activity.

7.2.1.4 *Excerpt 8: 'Not a blocker right now'*

As we continue the analysis, we see that categorizations of unexpected issues are negotiable and that actors in that negotiation process draw on different resources, such as epistemic authority.

In Excerpt 8, another 'blocker' is presented by two team members, and the blocker is then assessed and re-categorized as 'not a blocker' by the project manager. Reading through the excerpt, it is particularly relevant to notice the actors' actions, designs of turns, and displays of knowledge and entitlement.

Excerpt 8

```
50  JA:     so we have a blocker but raymond you'll follow up with the rescue [↑team]
51  RA:                                                                       [yeah ] i'll
52          follow up °with the rescue team°
53  RA:     {looks from JA to ? }
54  JO:     {looks at ? }
55  MI:     we have another ↑one
56  TO:     it is note (.) eh o s b: was: down in test and i restarted it °last night (  )
57          or (really) this morning (.) so°
58  RA:     {looks at JA}
59  JO:     {looks at JA}
60  JA:     so who who should be looking out for that normally is it the rescue↑ team or
61          (1.1) but >obviously they wouldn't have been [able in time<  ]
62  TO:                                                  [↑yeah it was it] was late °last
63          night°↘
64          (1.0)
65  JA:     so not a blocker right now↘ (.) all green
```

50 RA: {looks at TO} {looks at JA, smiles}
51 JO: {looks at TO} {looks at JA, smiles}
52 TO: yeah (.) but (.) with ( ) °you know might be a° [( )]
53 JA: [BE] positive tom
54 ? : [((laughter))]
55 JA: [be ↑positive]
56 TO: might be confused
57 JA: yeah
58 TO: =if it's on off

This excerpt shows that categorizations are negotiated in interaction rather than necessarily immediately and collectively agreed upon, as in Excerpt 7. What the excerpt also makes clear is that specific categorizations matter greatly for both in situ meaning-making and for organization of response actions.

Jack produces a formulation in line 50 that functions as a conclusion of the topic but also as a method to check that Raymond has accepted that assignment. Raymond responds, this time verbally, and accepts the assignment. Michael treats the formulation as a closing of the topic and takes the turn, calling attention to another blocker (line 55). He phrases it 'we have', which could indicate that they as a team have another one, but the 'we' appears to be referring to himself and Tom, since Tom takes this as a cue to explain the specific issue. Without further introduction, he explains what the blocker is and what he has done to solve it (line 56). His unexplained use of the word 'osb' and the phrase 'down in test' suggest that he takes for granted that the others are able to understand this without further explanation. This indicates that these professional terms and what they infer are taken to be membership knowledge.

Michael's turn is a *first positioned assessment* (Heritage & Raymond, 2005), which is produced in collaboration with Tom. Sequentially, assessments usually invites for next-speaker agreement, and as assessments express knowledge and epistemic authority, the design of assessments matter in terms of negotiating the epistemic statuses of the interlocutors (Heritage & Raymond, 2005). Assessments such as the one in this excerpt suggest a *first order access* to what is being assessed, which thus outweighs other possible second order assessments; here, Michael assesses the situation, categorizing the issues as a blocker, and Tom demonstrates first order access to the issue. His assessment and categorization of the issue as a blocker is thus rooted in practical experience. As noted by Heritage and Raymond (2006, p. 680), members have 'privileged access to their own experiences and … specific rights to narrate them'; thus, as members, Tom and Michael have rights to perform assessments and frame the experienced problem as a problem. However, by mentioning their assessment in the issue *this* setting, in which issues are to be discussed and assessed, they also present the assessment/categorization of the issue as a negotiable, in that it becomes available for the project manager (or others) to assess.

Although the two team members demonstrate epistemic status (Heritage, 2012) per their first order access, the assessment (and explanation of the issue) is unmarked, in the sense that it is neither upgraded nor

downgraded. The actors can thus be seen as orienting towards the socio-epistemic status of the others and the entitlements associated with their situated and institutional identities (Heritage & Raymond, 2005); that is, they orient towards Jack, as the project manager, being the one who has authority and is entitled in situ to make final categorizations of issues as blockers or not.

Following this, Jack delivers a follow-up question (line 60) and thus does not question their first order access or the assessment but rather orients towards his own epistemic obligation towards acquiring sufficient information to organize response actions; again (as in the previous excerpt, line 9), he orients towards problem resolution and assignment of responsibility by asking who needs to attend to the issue. Jack uses a similar turn design of his questions in both this and the former excerpt; he uses the words 'who' and 'look/looking' (line 1 and line 60), here expanding by also suggesting an answer: 'rescue team'. We thus see repetition in terms of 1) actions performed and 2) repetition of turn design.

After a brief pause, Jack recycles the turn and answers his own question with an explanatory comment about why the rescue team has not solved the problem yet (indicating the time difference between India and Denmark to be the reason). Tom confirms this answer and expands on the explanation (line 61), also implicitly referencing the time difference. The participants treat this global, virtual way of working as matter-of-fact, non-surprising, and as ordinary for their work setting. Furthermore, the actors construct these matters as membership knowledge, meaning knowledge they have qua their membership of the project team and qua their practical engagement with project-related work. Thus, through their explicit demonstrations of and implicit references to knowledge, the actors are making the categories 'team members' and 'project manager' relevant.

Next, using the information just presented by Tom, Jack reassesses the blocker and categorizes it as being 'not a blocker'. Furthermore, he adds a time-relevant categorization by adding 'right now' and concludes with a positive 'all green' (line 65). Here, Jack seems to orient towards his role as project manager, since he displays entitlement to overrule Tom's initial categorization of this matter as blocker and decide that it is not relevant as such *in the present*. Thereby, he implicitly displays *his* understanding that blockers are problems actually blocking the progression of the project work *here and now*.

Next, Tom attempts to contradict Jack's categorization, indicated by his 'yeah but' (line 68). However, his turn is interrupted by Jack who uses humour to side-track and downgrade Tom's counterargument (lines 69–71). Previous studies have found these types of playful comments to be ambiguous in their meaning and that talking turns containing laughter that are produced in overlap, as is the case here, can be a way to frame the previous turn as 'play' (Holt, 2016). However, despite the interruption and possible attempt to side-track, Tom continues his turn and raises a problem that the issue is causing ('confused if it is on off', lines 72–74). This move is 'rewarded' by Jack, who acknowledges the problem with a 'yeah' (line 73), said without laughter, but it does not lead to a re-categorization of the issue as a blocker. Similarly, Heritage (2012, p. 5)

notes that ‘difficult epistemic circumstances can be created when incommensurate epistemic resources are in conflict’ such as here, where first-hand experience is trumped by authority and general experience.

The excerpt illustrates that categorizations are never ‘set in stone’ but are rather ‘negotiables’ and that authority and entitlements as well as epistemic status influence and can be used in the categorization process. Thus, to reach collective categorizations is in fact an interactional accomplishment.

7.2.1.5 *Excerpt 9: ‘another blocker’*

In the third and final excerpt, a team member again reports a blocker, and again the report is followed by a talk about the issue and who needs to be assigned responsibility for response actions. In this excerpt, a repetitiveness in turn designs and actions becomes more apparent.

Please note that in lines 94–95, Michael switches briefly to Danish, and the translation of this is found in line 95, marked with (( )) and italics.

Excerpt 9

85	MA:	((chuckles)) al[right]
86	MI:	[>i have] another blocker< (1.6) we can't deploy into dev
87	MA:	{writes on post-it}
88		(1.8)
89	JA:	why: is ↑that do we know↗
90	MI:	e:h because e:h it looks like the eh git pull from the hudson job eh doesn't
91		get the newest files from git
92		(1.0)
93	JA:	okay (0.4) and who is that with
94	MI:	i just sent an email to eh the eh what it's called (.) de plejer at sidde up
95		on the fifth floor *((They usually sit up on the fifth floor))*
96	JA:	[devops]
97	MA:	[devops]
98	JA:	okay↘
99	JO:	{turns towards MA}
100	MA:	mm (1.2) alright (.) anything ↑else for the block list
101		(2.8)
102	MA:	al[right]
103	MA:	{looks at JA}
104	JA:	[okay] so one with raymond one with devops
105	MA:	mm

In this excerpt, patterns of action and turn design that were indicated in the previous two excerpts become even more pronounced. Also, we again see how the categorization of an unexpected issue as a blocker is consequential for the following actions in situ, as it apparently necessitates the immediate assignment of responsibility. Finally, we again see how the team orient towards unexpected events and the management of these unexpected issues as ordinary in this setting.

In overlap with Martin, Michael takes the turn; Martin appears to be ready to close the topic, indicated by his use of the boundary marker 'alright' (line 85) and by Michael rushing his speech overlap ('I have another blocker', line 86), a practice commonly used if one wants to take or keep a turn. Michael's turn is almost identical to his assessment in line 55, except here the pronoun 'we' is replaced by 'I' and it is very similar to Joslin's report of a blocker in line 4 ('I have'). Thus, there is repetition in the actors' turn designs and this suggests to us as observers that this is 'the way' to design one's report of blockers in order to make it recognizable to others as such in this type of action.

After a brief pause, where no one takes the turn, Michael explains what the blocker is. Contrary to the two other excerpts, Michael himself from the very start of his turn categorizes the reported issue as a blocker. This categorization appears to be immediately ratified by Martin, who starts to write on a Post-it note (line 87) and thereby produces it as something that they need to organize action in response to. Martin's action can also be understood as a sign of membership knowledge and experiences, in that he seems to know or expect that this 'blocker' will remain categorized as such and thus belongs in the list.

Jack then takes the turn and asks about the reason for the problem (line 89) rather than asking who needs to look at it, as he did in the two other excerpts. This 'discontinuity' in actions could suggest that he needs additional information before he is able to assess the appropriate evaluation and actions. Michael answers hesitantly, saying 'it looks like', and thereby suggests that he is uncertain about the root of the problem. Here, the actors' membership knowledge again becomes apparent; Michael's use of what appears to be names ('git' and 'Hudson job', lines 90–91) is treated as completely comprehensible by Jack and Martin and can thus be taken as displays of tacit membership knowledge. After another brief pause, Jack again takes the turn (line 93) and shows acceptance of the answer with an 'okay'. He then asks who is responsible ('who is that with', line93) and the orientation towards assigning responsibility suggests that he accepts the reported matters as a problem and the categorization of it as a blocker.

Michael responds to Jack's question with an explanation of what he has done (lines 94–95), implicitly identifying the responsible party. This closely resembles how Joslin designed her answer in line 10. The two turns indicate to us that the members make an effort to solve the unexpected issues but also that they in situ make an effort to position themselves as proactive, competent members. This suggests that it might have been treated as problematic by the others if they had done nothing in response to the issues. Jack seems to accept the matter as managed sufficiently for now, since he utters an 'okay' (line 96) and does not pursue the topic any further. Similar to Excerpt 9, Jack orients towards ensuring that actions are organized here and now

in order to ensure that the problem is solved after the meeting. Before Martin closes the topic (starting line 100), Jack produces a formulation (line 104) in which he mentions the two categorized blockers and leaves out the non-blocker, thereby again confirming its categorization. He also notes who is responsible for the two blockers, thereby accentuating who will need to take action.

Thus, the members actively use categorization to produce collective understanding of what is going on, and through talk about the issues and their impact, they are able to organize actions. This type of talk is evidently possible due to their membership knowledge and situational use hereof. The excerpt shows the third instance of the actors orienting towards the report of unexpected events as appropriate in the particular setting. They display familiarity with how to 'do' the activity, and they construct the type of talk taking place in this setting as ordinary.

Once again in this excerpt, we see how specific types of actions are performed by the different actors: the team members report issues, the project manager orients towards assigning responsibility, and Martin orients towards organizing the issues on the board. Across the three excerpts, we thus see a pattern in terms of actions. Furthermore, we see a pattern in the actors' orientations towards the issues as unexpected and the categorized blockers as matters that need immediate attention, both here and now in their talk as well as in terms of response actions. This repetitive organization of response actions in combination with the material labelling of blockers as such ensures that no blocker is left unattended. The actors collectively construct the issues as both issues and unexpected, but by reflexively invoking membership knowledge and by using the available materials, they handle these emergent issues and produce understandings of them as manageable, although unexpected.

The efficient coordination of actions and how to enact the relevant roles suggests it is not the first time the team has engaged in this activity. Combining this with patterns in actions, interactional order, and categorical order, we get an indication that the actors understand and treat this as a repetitive activity.

The unexpected issues talked about in this meeting are categorized as 'manageable'; none of them are treated as extremely problematic or as causing extreme disruption to the project, and actions *can* be organized in response. Through the categorization of blockers/non-blockers, the actors can collectively make sense of the unexpected events (as such and what they comprise of), place these in a larger context, identify interdependencies and relations, and thus organize actions. It is apparent that the categorization of issues as a either a blocker or non-blocker impacts the projection of action, both in situ and beyond the meeting.

7.2.1.6 *Meeting 1: Findings*

The analysis of the excerpts from Meeting 1 demonstrates that the construction of shared understanding of unexpected issues (as either unexpected *issues* or not) is tremendously important for how the team organizes actions in response. More importantly, the analysis shows patterns in the interaction that suggest that the

actors are not only able to organize response actions but may even have routinized the management of (this type of) unexpected issues.

Here, we see empirical indications of what has been conceptually defined as routines (section 3.1). There are several indications that the actors understand the meeting as a routine activity and have routinized the management of unexpected issues. The analysis illustrated that by reflexively using membership knowledge and materials in the setting, the actors come to understand the issues as manageable and unexpected at the same time and are able to organize response actions. That the sensemaking and organization processes are interrelated and routinized is indicated by the clear patterns with regard to categories performed, actions taken, interactional order, and turn designs.

Firstly, there are clear patterns in terms of produced categories, and the actors display familiarity with their roles and the actions expected. The members construct their membership of the project team by actively participating in the meeting and demonstrating relevant knowledge about the ongoing project activities, which shows that they are 'in the know' (Boden, 1994). Furthermore, the actors continuously construct and orient to the context as a project setting, and at no point in the activity is an action treated as 'out of place'.

Categories are not performed randomly but are context-bound (Stephen Hester & Eglin, 1997); that is, situational actions and context interact in the construction of categories. Stokoe (2012, p. 282) notes that each category 'carries a different set of category-bound activities, predicates, or rights and obligations that are expectable for an incumbent of that category to perform'. Thus, as the actors in this meeting perform category-bound actions, they make specific categories relevant; for instance, the actions of assigning tasks and responsibilities *within* a project setting are in this situated context bound to and constructing the category 'project manager'. Here, knowledge and talk about project activities are predicates for categories associated with the collection 'project team' (Whittle et al., 2014).

Furthermore, for members of categories follow specific entitlements and obligations with regard to knowledge territories and competences (Heritage, 2011). By displaying knowledge about what is taking place in practice and thus demonstrating involvement in the project work, the team members produce membership of the collection 'project. Collectively, they are 'doing being a project team', and thus *doing being ordinary* (Sacks, 1995) in a project context.

Although, the actors belonging to the same collection, the analysis shows that variation in regard to which actions are relevant for which categories. In that, the project manager category is enacted by Jack, since he, contrary to the team members, does not report issues but rather displays entitlement to assess, ratify, or reject categorizations of issue. By attending to differences in the actors' actions, it thereby becomes apparent that social epistemics influence the interactional order.

Secondly, through their actions, the actors continuously accomplish the activity as a familiar and routinized type of meeting in which they are to manage unexpected matters. It seems that the actors continuously, during the meeting coordinate their actions to construct mutual understanding of the activity as

this specific *type* of routine meeting (LeBaron et al., 2016). In other words, *during* the interaction the actors reflexively produce turns, related to the previous turns, and constitute the meeting and enables it to progress according what the actors orient to as expected in this meeting. Thus, the members produce the activity as recognizable to others, and in turn, the others through their next-actions ratify this understanding. Previous studies have also found that actors through closely coordinated interaction construct routines as such during the routine activities (Aggerholm & Asmuß, 2016; LeBaron et al., 2016).

The analysis shows that, the actors on turn level produce repetitive patterns – in terms of sequential organization, turn design, and action types – which suggests that the actors have in fact routinized the interactional unfolding of this type of meeting. The production of a routine can be seen as an accomplishment because they are produced and recognized despite an array of other options (Schegloff 1986). The routinization contributes to the reproduction of the project as recognizable despite constant changes and uncertainty, in the sense that the actors can recognize specific activities as routine project activities and thus as (reproduced) 'constants'.

The routine meeting activity, including the use of materials, seems to function a preventive measure. The meeting allows for the actors to report, discuss and assess issues, talk about possible contingencies, and organize actions – thus *preventing* the issues developing from manageable to problematic. Just having a daily status meeting with a 'block list' indicates that the team is expecting something unexpected to occur. In that sense, the meeting is not preventing the issues from occurring, in fact the actors expect unexpected issues to emerge, but the meeting does prevent the issues from escalating or being overlooked.

That the project team has daily meetings and uses a tool such as a Kanban board suggests that they expect unexpected problems, as these measures would not be necessary if everything always went according to plan. The meeting type can be understood as a pre-planned, routinized occasion to manage emergent problems – this suggests that the team *knows* that unexpected things will happen. The unexpected issues talked about in this meeting are categorized as 'manageable'; none of them are treated as extremely problematic or as causing extreme disruption to the project, and actions *can* be organized in response.

In a sense, the meeting is a method for *containing* unexpected issues that occur despite precautions. Through talk and the use of the materials, the team makes sense of the issues and thus contains uncertainties. In a routinized manner, the actors orient to and use the materials available to them in the setting: The materials of the setting prove important in terms of producing intersubjectivity, organizing actions, and subsequently minimizing the (possible) impact of the problem. By verbally categorizing issues as blockers and then transforming these to tangible objects (e.g. Post-it notes placed on a board), the actors construct these as manageable and processed here and how and as relevant act on after the meeting. Thus, through their routinized interaction and use of materials, they produce predictability in terms of how to interact in situ but also re-establish predictability in the overall project by attending to possible disruptions – in a sense, they

are containing possible uncertainties by attending to manageable, unexpected issues in a routine constructed for just this purpose. The unexpectedness is not problematized but rather routinized.

The unexpected issues in this meeting were treated as minor, manageable, and did not cause deviation to the project plan, challenge the project progression or have a significant impact on the project environment. However, as the first section of this chapter revealed, projects are constantly facing many different types of deviations or unexpected situations. Thus, it is relevant to ask how project actors in situ handle events that are understood as causing the project to deviate from the plan and that seem to produce much uncertainty?

In the following section, I will unfold these topics and examine how actors facing considerable deviations, which can potentially derail or delay the overall project, actually make sense of these and are able to continue the project work.

7.2.2 Meeting 2: Space for sensemaking

Meeting 2 illustrates a different kind of unexpected issue than those in Meeting 1; namely, one that is treated as unexpected unexpectedness. During the observations, I only witnessed a few instances where unexpected events deviated the project progression and had a substantial impact on the project environment. This particular meeting was selected because it was the only instance where I recorded a team talking about an event that they treated as entirely unexpected.

The following analysis of a fragment from the meeting will explore how a major deviation is understood as such and how the project actors make sense of the situation and identify relevant actions. The analysis demonstrates how intersubjectivity and awareness of relevant actions are achieved through the construction of an appropriate story.

7.2.2.1 *The project and actors*

This project team was working on a project called ReBooking. The aim of the project was to create a website for a strategically important customer, Transfers Global. The project was highly interconnected with other projects working on system developments. At the time of observation, the planned launch of the website was within the next one and a half months, meaning that the project was approaching a critical time as well as its handover and closing phases.

The project team was led by the senior project manager Andrew, located in Copenhagen together with four team members and an additional temporary team member who was working part-time on the project. Furthermore, the team included two team members located in Ukraine. The project team also collaborated with a global vendor company, CorpConsult, who were to deliver specifically assigned work.

The team was observed for one day only due to sudden travel arrangements. Four meetings were video-recorded and an additional ad hoc meeting was sound-recorded.

Here, I will briefly describe the day leading up to the team meeting in focus, since the unexpected event was not only discussed in the team meeting but was in focus throughout the day.

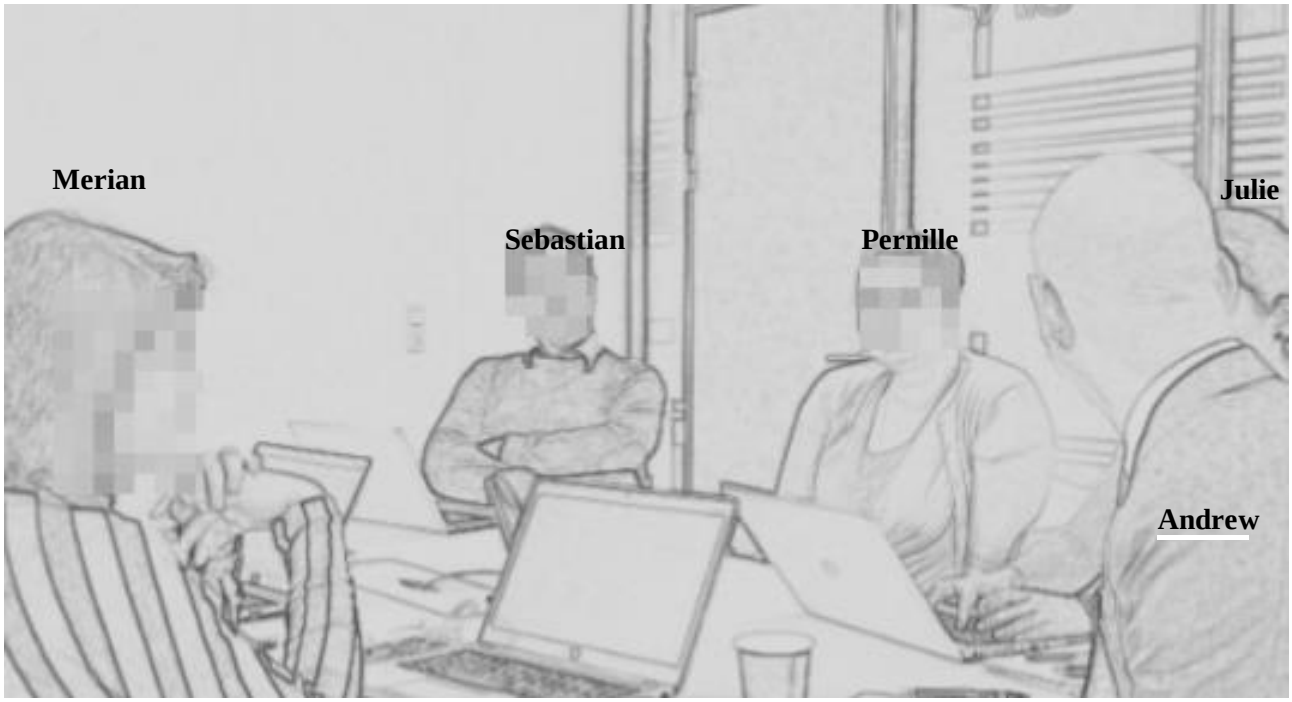
At the beginning of the day of observation, the project manager (Andrew) informed me that the vendor had failed to the deliver the expected work on time and now the project was facing a problematic delay to the launch.

The first meeting of the day was a conference call between Andrew, some high-level internal project stakeholders, and representatives from the vendor company, and they were to discuss the problem. During the meeting, Andrew underlined the criticality of the failure and clearly stated what he expected from the vendor going forward, for example, 'more clarity' and that they need to find a way to 'understand the major changes'. Furthermore, he offered the vendors his team's assistance if that would be helpful; thus, finding a solution was positioned as very important.

After the first meeting, the programme manager and the senior project manager came to where the project team and Andrew sat to discuss the problem. During their ad hoc meeting, the senior project manager stated: 'This is taking down the entire project', thus underlining the severity of the deviation. After this meeting, the project manager participated in other pre-planned meetings, but throughout the day he also continuously had conversations with stakeholders regarding the problem. The project team members continued with their ongoing work tasks; thus, these activities were not suspended, indicating that the unexpected event at this point was not directly impacting all areas of the project and that work within the project was somewhat loosely coupled (Orton & Weick, 1990). In the afternoon, the project team held a weekly team meeting, which we will focus on in the micro-analysis.

7.2.2.2 *The meeting*

The meeting chosen for analysis is a weekly team meeting, and it is only the members of the internal project team who are present. The meeting is both local and virtual; it is a telephone conference, where the majority of the participants are sitting in one room together in the company headquarters in Copenhagen and two other team members are calling in from Ukraine. Present in the meeting room are: Andrew (AN), Merian (ME), Sebastian (SE), Pernille (PE), Julie (JU), and Benjamin (BE), who we cannot see in the video (Picture 7). The two team members in Ukraine are calling in via phone.



Picture 7

The fragment selected for analysis is from the very beginning of the meeting. The project manager, Andrew, is acting as the meeting chair and has just opened the meeting. The analysis demonstrates that Andrew influences the collective sensemaking process by constructing a story about the unexpected incident and in this conveys his own understanding of what has happened, who is to blame, what is being done to solve it, and how it impacts the project. Throughout the fragment, Andrew is the only one who speaks, but the other project actors present in the room very actively contribute and facilitate the construction of the story through embodied actions.

7.2.2.3 *Excerpt 10: 'some serious problems'*

As we begin the fine-grained analysis of Meeting 2 by exploring Excerpt 10, we start to see how stories can function as practical resources to explain problematic situations. In the excerpt, Andrew begins to construct the story about what has happened and through this story frames the problem as unexpected and extensive. It is relevant to pay attention to how Andrew frames the unexpected problem as well as note the orientations of the others.

Excerpt 10

AN: so last week we had this whole call where we were very happy happy and (.) you know ˇyeah we are going live in some timeˇ ehm and I was thinking ˇshould we have some cake before we goˇbut apparently

ME: {laughs}

PE: {smiles}

SE: {smiles}

JU: {smiles}

(1.0)

AN: {looks at ME and then around room and then down}

SE: {raises eyebrows}

AN: i'll have to say the last eh week has been the toughest in the entire project and eh it's clearly thrown some (0.5) curve balls

AN: {gazes at ME and then looks at table}

ME: {nods}

AN: before go live which has (.) really questioned the go live in some way or the other↘ so: what i'll do is i will give some updates eh about what has been happening in the last few days (.) eh some of you know some of you

AN: {gazes at ME and then looks at table}

ME: {nods}

AN: have been hearing conversations eh to wonder (1.5).h so: h (0.8) Bjorn visited on friday

PE: {nods} {gazes at ME}

AN: {looks at ME}

ME: {nods}

AN: he was very happy (.) that things were happening that we were going live and the (phase) approach was working in ( ) and then on friday at six p m rasmus walked up and he said ehm we have some serious problems with the website↘

(4 four lines omitted)

AN: ah corpconsult (0.8) completely i don't know how or what were they doing for two months that they missed ehm about fifty requirements of the website↘

SE: {raises eyebrows, moves back in chair crossing arms}

PE: {raises eyebrows}

(2.1)

AN: so: (1.5) a the website will not be delivered on the eight of (.) december↘ b we don't have any date at the moment (.) as to when their requirements can be completed can be the:n developed tested and launched↘

In this excerpt, we see how Andrew initiates a longer story and uses the chronological unfolding of events to explain the unexpected problem that has occurred.

Andrew begins the story with a pre-story in which he reminds the listeners of last week's team meeting (line 10). Using a smiling voice to animate the story (lines 11-12) and by referring to their state of mind at the time, 'happy' (line 10), he positions *that* point in time as very positive. Then, by using the shift of status token 'but' and trailing off of the word 'apparently' (line 12), he indicates that something has changed. Upon his positive recollection of last week, he laughs and receives smiles and a laugh as responses (lines 13–17). Merian is the one who laughs (line 17) and thus affiliates with Andrew's stance towards the past situation as *a laughable* (Holt, 2016; Tranekjær, 2017). The term *affiliation* (or *disaffiliation*) is used to 'describe actions with which a recipient displays that s/he supports the affective stance expressed by the speaker' (Lindström & Sorjonen, 2013, p. 351) or as phrased by Stivers (2008, p. 35) 'that the hearer displays support of and endorses the teller's conveyed stance'. This suggests to us that she is *in the know* (Boden, 1994) about why this matter is laughable.

Then, Andrew assesses the current week as the 'toughest in entire project' (line 20). He continues and clearly insinuates that something unexpected has happened ('curve balls', line 21), and although he has not yet unveiled what it is, he implies that it is of high severity because it has questioned the 'go live' (line 24) – something that challenges the very *raison d'etre* of the project (Lundin & Söderholm, 1995). Andrew then explains the activity that he has already initiated, that is, informing the team about what has happened (lines 25–26). In doing this, he also acknowledges that some of them may already have heard a little about the incident. Then, Andrew tells them about a visit by a person named Bjorn, who was 'very happy' with the project (line 34). Here, Andrew reuses the phrases 'very happy' and thus connects their status last week with Bjorn's perception. Referring to Bjorn without further explanation indicates that Andrew takes for granted that the team members know who he is, that it is membership knowledge (Sacks, 1995). Through the observations, I learnt that Bjorn is the CEO of the customer company and thus a very important visitor.

The story reaches the point of no return when a person named Rasmus informs Andrew of 'serious problems with the website' (lines 35–36). That it is someone external to the project team who delivers this information suggests that the 'problems' are not rooted in the internal project work but rather are externally caused. Thus, by mentioning Rasmus, Andrew 1) drives the narrative, 2) underlines the severity of the problems with the website, 3) positions the problems as externally caused, and, finally, 4) positions Andrew as the one having the serious talks with the organizational leaders.

In line 40–41, Andrew finally explicates the actual problem: CorpConsult has missed fifty requirements of the website, meaning they have failed to do the work required and agreed upon (line 41). He makes it evident that this deviation was not foreseen and places all the blame on the vendor. He distances himself from the vendor's actions ('I don't know how or what were they doing', line 40), and thereby also claims no prior knowledge of the problem. Next, Andrew uses a listing technique ('a' and 'b', line 45) to explain the consequences: a) that the website will not 'go live' on the announced date, and b) they do not know when it can be launched.

Through the story, the vendor company and thus people working in this company are categorized as the 'villains', which is an extremely unattractive role, but an important category in a narrative. In regard to categorization, Whittle et al. (2014, p. 396) notes: 'Categories are crucial in framing … because they provide a way of giving meaning to actors or events and providing forms of reasoning about how they can be acted upon'. The categorizations thus influence the constructions of meaning that are ongoing as the story unfolds. As previous studies have also found, stories such as this are effective discursive resources to convey new information and influence collective sensemaking processes (Clifton, 2014; Havermans et al., 2015). Furthermore, through categorization work and framing, the project manager's own perception of the event is made available: Not only is he telling them 'how the situation is', he is also providing his own stance towards the situation, the involved actors, their actions, and the general impact. We here see that the project manager is in a position where he can construct the story in such a way that it matches his own perception, but also in such a way as to position him and the team most positively and enable them to produce new understandings. This is important for the project work as it moves forward because 'meanings shape both social realities and actors' subsequent reactions to such realities' (Sonenshein, 2010, p. 478); thus, it impacts how the actors understand their action space. The term 'action space' (or 'space for action') has previously been used by e.g. Griesbach and Grand (2013) in an exploration of the construction of current and future managerial action spaces, and the term can be used understand the spaces within which actors can act and have influence and/responsibilities (the term 'action space' is also used within CA-studies (Goodwin, 2000), however here it is used to describe an situated, interactional space of action).

Furthermore, Andrew thus performs category-relevant actions *in* the situation and demonstrates relevant knowledge, making the category 'project manager' relevant. To categorize these actions as category-bound is not random; instead, we can take these to be category-bound actions in this situation due to the members' orientations and their division of actions, which are seemingly connected to their institutional roles. By making the category 'project manager' relevant, he also makes the associated entitlements relevant; as the project manager, he has both the entitlement and obligation to be involved in the organizational governance of the project and has epistemic obligation to share relevant information to the relevant people. The story thus displays his epistemic status and territories of knowledge as the project manager as well as his right and obligation to disseminate this information. As noted by Heritage (2013, p. 558), epistemic status 'involves not just the actual possession of information, but rights to possess it and to articulate it'. The project team members treat Andrew's display of knowledge and indication of knowledge territory, the topics talked about, as well as the story-action as 'ordinary'.

Throughout the excerpt, the members actively display listening through minimal responses and embodied actions, which previous research has found can be claims of understanding (Mondada, 2011) or signs of affiliation (Stivers, 2008). The listeners are thus not without agency, but they are actively performing the situational roles of information-receivers/listeners; thus, they are 'doing constructing new understandings' or

'doing getting news'. The response tokens suggest both *alignment* with the activity and sometimes affiliation of the tellers' stances; for instance, Pernille and Sebastian produce coordinated facial expressions as the problem is unveiled, both lift their eyebrows and thus signal that they are surprised (lines 42–43), showing affiliation with Andrew's distancing from the vendor-caused problems, his framing of the problem as unexpected, and his categorization of the vendor as the 'villain'; they thereby 'endorse the teller's perspective' (Stivers, 2008, p. 32). As noted by Steensig (2012, p. 1), alignment 'involves accepting the interactional roles involved in the activity; for instance, in the context of storytelling, accepting the role as a storytelling recipient' or, as Stivers (2008, p. 34) phrases it, alignment 'supports the structural asymmetry of the storytelling activity: that a storytelling is in progress and the teller has the floor until story completion', thereby making the telling of the story possible.

The talk about what has occurred is taking place in one of the team's regular weekly meetings, and none of the actors orient towards the talk of the project manager as being out of place, suggesting that the actions and context are familiar, even if the unexpected situation is not. Through their actions, they are making the categories 'project manager' and 'team members' relevant, and they thereby are doing being ordinary (Sacks 1984) in a project context in the midst of what they treat as an extraordinary situation. Thus, the discursive work performed by the project manager in this meeting and the (non-verbal) responses provided by the others enable the collective understanding through the construction of the story about the deviation, framed as unexpected, problematic, and currently creating much uncertainty, since there is no solution in sight.

7.2.2.4 *Excerpt 11: 'the situation is actually quite grave'*

In Excerpt 11, as Andrew continues the story, we come to understand the impact of the problem and what response actions are being performed.

Here, it is relevant to notice what has been initiated to solve the problem and also (again) the framing of the vendors' actions as well as the non-verbal contributions of the team members.

Excerpt 11

```
66  AN:    and why this attention has gone is because ehm .h tranfers global has gone to
67         the media and the press saying
68  SE:    {nods}
69  PE:    {nods}
70  AN:    that they can start taking bookings from the eight (.)so the situation is
71  AN:    {gestures with hands}
72  AN:    actually quite grave
73  PE:    {nods}
74  AN:    so we had a call today morning and then we went (round through) eh
75  ME:    {nods}
```

66 AN: corpconsult has roped in some senior people to see what can be done but even
67 the senior guys were there they noticed they've just completely completely
68 dropped the ball↘

Here, the urgency of the problem is made clear as Transfers Global have publicly announced the date for the launch of the new website and we learn that others have already started working on finding solutions to the problem.

In lines 66–70, Andrew emphasizes to the team why this deviation is so problematic; apparently, Transfers Global has already publicly announced the launch date of the website (lines 66–70). Thus, the deviation and corresponding delay of the site impacts the reputation as well as the revenue of the company, since they cannot 'take bookings' if the site is not functional. Again, Andrew provides his stance towards the situation by categorizing it as 'quite grave', with an emphasis on 'grave' (line 72).

Throughout the extract, Pernille, Sebastian, and Merian produce nods in coordination with Andrew's talk. At first, Pernille and Sebastian provide nods, which can be understood as their display of alignment with the ongoing storytelling activity, encouraging Andrew to continue. Stivers (2008, p. 43) has previously found that 'in contrast to vocal continuers, nods are typically positioned following telling elements that provide the recipient with access to the events being reported', as we see here.

We might also interpret Pernille's second nod (line 73) as affiliation with Andrew's stance and categorization of the situation as 'grave' (line 72). Considering Mondada's demonstration that nods can be ways of displaying understandings, the close timing of the stance-taking and the nod makes it possible that *this* nod signals affiliation with his categorization of the deviation as 'grave', and through the nod she claims that she understands. Furthermore, the timing of Merian's nod suggests this to be a confirmation of Andrew's report of a meeting 'they' had earlier the same day (lines 74–78). Thus, we here get confirmation that Merian from the very beginning of the meeting had more information about the unexpected deviation than the others.

In general, and as these excerpts make clear, listeners are rarely passive (despite silence) but instead actively display themselves as 'listening' through small tokens. Through small embodied continuers and displays of affiliation and alignment, the team members here enable Andrew to inform them about the situation as he perceives it, and they seem to affiliate with his stances and perspective, thereby contributing to the collective construction of understanding of 'what is going on'. When looking at the responses of the listeners, it becomes evident that the local actors, compared to those calling in, have many more and richer communicative resources available, since even without talking they are able to act as co-constructors of the story. The distance team members do not have the same possibility due to the lack of visual contact, and as the story unfolds they can as such only contribute by not interrupting or disagreeing, thereby showing at least alignment with the activity.

In this excerpt, line 74–78, the project manager shifts from talking about what the situation *is* to what is *being done* to solve it. Andrew makes it clear that CorpConsult is working to solve the situation and has even called in extra resources (line 76), suggesting that the vendor takes the situation very seriously. Here, it further becomes clear that the project team is not involved in the 'rescue operation'; rather, it is CorpConsult who are responsible for providing a solution. It seems that there is not anything that the project team members can currently do to respond to the deviation or to solve it – the resolution lies outside of their space of action. Only the project manager has a (limited) action space, as he can engage in coordination and communication with stakeholders. Thus, the deviation is constructed as creating great uncertainty for the project and as unmanageable for the team, but possibly as manageable for others due to differences in areas of responsibility.

The framing of a lack of 'response-action space' makes it relevant for the actors to focus on their own ongoing work tasks. Subsequently, after the fragment, the team starts to discuss the status of their ongoing tasks, suggesting to us as observers that these are not directly impacted by the deviation. I will not include a detailed analysis of this part of the meeting, but it is relevant to mention that after the story there is no continued discussion of the situation amongst the team members. Thus, although the actors construct the project situation as highly problematic and uncertain, their own work space (at least for now) is treated as manageable.

Thus, through the story, the unexpected problems are constructed and categorized as externally caused and as greatly impacting the customer and the project's success. The issue is treated as highly problematic and is framed by the project manager as completely unexpected. The story takes place 'somewhere else', and it is not the team but others who are the central actors in the story. Consequently, the team is positioned as without space to produce response actions – it is out of their hands, since they have no means or opportunities to work towards control of the situation. The team's only option is to establish an *understanding* of what is happening and then continue with their own work as much as possible. This is accomplished through the story, which functions as a resource for the team to produce a collective understanding of the situation and their space of action.

7.2.2.5 *Meeting 2: Findings*

The analysis of this meeting fragment has shown us that unexpected issues can be very complex matters to handle. The team in this specific situation are at a stage where there is an immediate need for them to make sense of what is going on, and through the project managers' story they construct sense and learn that they have a very limited space of action. Contrary to the previous analysis, where the actors could rely on categorization *and* routinization to produce collective understanding and ensure organization actions, the

actors in this particular setting have to use discursive resources within the routine meeting in order to produce mutual understanding.

The meeting setting in which the deviation is talked about is of great relevance; the meeting activity itself is treated as familiar by the actors, and they display knowledge about their roles in the activity, what is expected of them, how to engage with the materials of the setting, and how to position themselves in the room. There are clear differences between the actions taken by the project manager and the other actors, but all orient towards these actions as expected. Their actions are context-embedded and make specific categories relevant. Thus, in the midst of project disruption, the actors are 'doing being ordinary' and orienting towards the activity they are engaged in as ordinary (Sacks 1984). Even though the meeting topic is constructed as extraordinary, the meeting itself is a weekly occurrence and the actors treat the meeting itself as a routine activity they are familiar with. The setting is treated as familiar and ordinary in the middle of an uncertain situation. Further, the actor treat the 'division' of discursive roles (i.e. the project manager as 'storyteller' and the team members as 'listeners') as appropriate and as ordinary in within this context.

In contrast, the analysis makes it clear that this type of unexpected event, being major and externally caused, is not in itself treated as routine or common but rather as something extraordinary. Accordingly, the actors cannot routinize the management of such a deviation. Instead, the familiar, routine meeting setting functions as a *space for sensemaking*. Within that space the actors through other resources (the story) can produce sensemaking and organize some type of action (work tasks) despite an incomplete overview, lack action space and power, and high-levels of uncertainty.

Within the routine meeting, the story is used to collectively construct understandings about what is going on. In this analysis, we see how the story has several functions: Firstly, we see how mutual intelligibility is achieved through the construction of the story. The sequential structuring of events positions the deviation in a context and makes clear which actors are involved, how they relate to each other and the problem, and the level of current uncertainties. Thus, the uncertain (qua lack of knowledge) is a way handled through the story.

The project manager's categorization of the 'villains' of the situation enables the project team members to construct identities as competent members of the project who are not to blame for the deviation; the story ensures that they as a team have not failed and that the project is still 'alive'. This ensure that the actors' (unimpacted) work can continue. Secondly, we see how Andrew, as the primary 'storyteller', offers a particular way of understanding the situation. Andrew displays his stance (e.g. through categorization work) and also uses the story about what has happened as an account of *why* he understands and treats the situation as highly problematic and as unexpected. The team members align with the ongoing activity, since they continuously treat the project manager's turn as 'still in progress' (Stivers, 2008, p. 34), and whenever stances are displayed they affiliate and claim understanding. The fine-grained analysis here makes clear that although actors have different access to influencing understandings, sense is not 'given' to the listeners in a

context, as some suggest possible (Sonenshein, 2010), instead the listeners align, affirm, and contribute to the construction of meaning *during* the storytelling through their active listening as well as their cooperative embodied responses. Thus, understanding constituted through 'situated, contingent, embodied, and intersubjective dimensions' (Mondada, 2011, p. 542), and in that sense, within an EMCA perspective, understandings are always considered collectively accomplished. Thus, the story functions as a resource for producing collective sensemaking, as previous studies have also shown (Musca et al., 2014), however, the findings of this analysis also suggest that the 'telling of a story' is enables by the setting; that is, the routine meeting is constructed as an appropriate space to tell the story within.

In Meeting 2, understanding of the unexpected problem is achieved in situ through a story which is accomplished within a routine meeting, and this story and the meeting setting further enable the actors to make sense of which actions are relevant (and non-relevant) in and after the meeting. The analysis of Meeting 2 confirms that projects are influenced by environmental complexity, and that unexpected events (especially those of great impact) increase the level of uncertainty for the project actors. The practical implication of the analysis is that the management of major, unexpected deviations cannot be routinized and that there is instead an immediate need for establishing collective understandings of impact and action spaces in order to facilitate the progression of decoupled activities.

7.3 Analytical Findings

This analysis explored how project team members in situ handle instances of unexpectedness and how they achieve sensemaking and organization of action in uncertain situations. The analysis demonstrates that unexpected events do happen and that this unexpectedness is constructed, made sense of, and managed differently depending of the type of unexpectedness. That is, with some types of unexpectedness, actors can both make sense of *and* organize actions in response to the issue, whereas in other situations the actors can only make sense of, but not actually manage, the unexpectedness. Thus, categorizations of the issues as expected unexpected or unexpected unexpected greatly impact the sensemaking of relevant actions.

The analysis makes it clear that actors need to construct meaning and can rely on different resources to handle different kinds of unexpectedness. Specifically, the analysis shows two types of unexpectedness and subsequent responses: type 1) expected unexpectedness and type 2) unexpected unexpectedness.

The two types found in the analysis are illustrated in Table 6.

Types	Features	Management resources	Solution complexity
Type 1: Expected unexpectedness	Low uncertainty Emergent from daily work context Treated as ordinary Within action space	Routine activities (incl. material resources) Routinized interaction	Low solution complexity
Type 2: Unexpected unexpectedness	High uncertainty Emergent from external environment Treated as extraordinary Outside of action space	Routine activities Discursive resources	High solution complexity

Table 6. Two types of unexpectedness

The table outlines the features of these two types: the management resources, meaning the resources available to the actors to collectively manage the event *in situ* (i.e. resources to achieve sensemaking and possibly organize response actions, and thus *not* resources that the managers as such can use), and the solution complexity, meaning the complexity of actually solving the issues (e.g. if an issue requires one or many people and many types of skills or not).

Previous studies such as Hällgren and Maaninen-Olsson (2005) have reached similar results, suggesting different types of unexpected events; these types are differentiated in terms of actors' use of knowledge and familiarity with the type of issue. The results of my study complements these previous findings, as it is apparent that knowledge makes a difference for the actors ability to respond to the issue, however my study also develops on the previous by showing the *in situ* accomplishment of mutually understanding unexpected issues as such, the situated resources (methods) used in this sensemaking process, and how actors are able to organize relevant actions, and thereby handle the unexpected situation. Also, following the ethnomethodological methodology of this study, the categorization and typification of the two types of unexpectedness as well as their features is here grounded in the members' own orientations and their actions.

7.3.1 Effortful sensemaking

Across the analysis of the two meetings, there are both commonalities and substantial differences. The analysis demonstrated that the actors need to establish and produce efforts to establish collective sense of what the unexpected is and its impact and then towards organizing actions based on that understanding. The analysis finds that sensemaking and efforts towards constructing mutual understandings are fundamental for

the project team in terms of understanding the situational problem and the project in general. Weick (1995) underlines the importance of sensemaking by noting that a 'failure of sensemaking is consequential as well as existential. It throws into question the nature of self and the world' (p. 14), thus, the meaning we 'attribute' our lives and work in general, as well as specific situations, is essential for us to be able to make sense of our daily lives. It is through reflexive interaction that we construct meaning that for us is coherent and sensible, and, thus, without sensemaking, the project teams would have extreme difficulty interacting in situ as well as doing their work.

As is evident from Table 6, the actors can, depending on the type of unexpectedness, draw on different 'management resources' (routine meetings, routinization and discursive resources) to produce these collective understandings. Although these resources differ, the actors in both meetings also draw on their membership knowledge, categorization work, and the routine meeting context as resources to achieve sensemaking.

The routine meetings are produced as such and function as occasions to talk about and make sense of the unexpectedness. The meeting settings are oriented to as repetitive, routine activities – one weekly team meeting and one daily meeting – and the actors treat the settings as appropriate forums for talking about unexpected events. The analysed meetings differ both in terms of the type of unexpectedness that has occurred and in terms of the meetings' functions. The first meeting is – as is also evident from the use of the board – directly oriented towards managing ongoing work tasks and solving problems that may arise from day to day, whereas the second meeting is used for weekly updates and as a place where the (distributed) team can come together. However, common for the two meetings is that the routineness of the meeting settings seems to provide a sense of stability and ordinariness. This is largely similar to Analysis 1 (Chapter 6) where the project teams also treated the meeting setting as familiar routines.

Furthermore, in both meetings, the actors unproblematically display knowledge and produce actions that categorize themselves and others in project-relevant categories. The actors display a familiarity with their own and others' roles, and the unproblematic categorical ordering enables the actors to smoothly organize the interaction in ways that allow them to attend to the problems at hand.

Now, let us turn from the commonalities across the two analysed fragments and consider the two types of unexpectedness that we have observed.

7.3.2 Type 1: Expected unexpectedness

In the first team meeting, the team treat the issues they talk about as unexpected but at the same time as expected – they show that they expect that *something* unexpected will occur and they treat the unexpected issues that do occur as within the 'expected unexpected' category. The unproblematic achievement of sequential and categorical ordering as well the in situ categorization of the unexpected issues as such *and* as

manageable suggest that this is a routinized type of interaction and activity. In other words, it is seemingly not the first time the actors have encountered unexpected issues; in fact, they expect unexpected issues to occur and they make their expectancy of the unexpected visible for the observer in the interaction through their orientations, actions, and use of materials.

Through the routinized interaction, categorization work, and the use of membership knowledge, the actors produce intersubjectivity and subsequently produce the issues as a specific type of manageable issues. The routinized interaction, which is visible qua the repetitive sequential organization and turn designs, requires continuous reflexive actions to be achieved. That is, the actors need to continuously relate their actions to the previous actions and produce their actions in such a way that they are recognizable to the others as part of and contributing to the construction of the activity. Routines such as daily meetings and routinized interaction are consequently accomplished through situated reflexive actions as well as use of membership knowledge and practical reasoning (Garfinkel, 1967). We see that the project teams have organized routines (e.g. daily or weekly meetings) in which they manage unexpectedness and attempt to contain uncertainty. In that sense, the occurrence and expectancy of unexpectedness has generated pre-emptive measures that have seemingly become routines.

The actors use the material resources available in the setting to make sense of the issues and organize actions in situ. The routine meeting and the Kanban board function as a 'machine' for handling the unexpected issues, in that the board scaffolds how to 'go about' the management of the issues: Using the board as a starting point, the actors talk about issues, and as they label issues (as blockers) and place them on the board they contain them and make them manageable and relevant to solve (otherwise they are not placed on the board). Thus, they produce intersubjectivity about what the issues are and that these are manageable, and by using the board they manage the issues as much as possible in situ and in doing so organize actions to handle these going forward.

By using the board as a 'machine', the issues are thus transformed from unexpected problems to manageable activities. They are constructing the problems as *tame* (Grint, 2005), in the sense that although they may be complicated they are in fact solvable. For others, these problems may not be considered tame, but qua the team members' experience, skills, and membership knowledge, the actors can unproblematically make sense of and construct the unexpected issues as tame, rather than wicked. Based on the observations of project teams as well as the micro-analysis of Meeting 1, it seems that there are continuously unexpected issues to be 'processed' in the 'machine' throughout project lifespans.

Similar to Analysis 1, it seems relevant here to consider the material in use (the board) as transsituational. That is, the material is used daily, and as such is 'carried over' from one situational context to the next. Subsequently, the material continuously functions as a somewhat stable and at the same time changeable point of reference that the actors can use to make sense of the past and present and also orient towards the near future.

Although the board is a resource to handle the unexpected, it also seems (for us as observers) ambiguous; using the board does not require full understanding of the issues but rather selective attention. That is, even if issues are placed on the board, labelled in a particular way, and are thus made sensible and constructed as manageable, this does not mean that everything is known about this issue, not even how to resolve it. The talk about issues is rather brief in this meeting, and at this point there seems to be no need for further analysis of the issues – the purpose of the meeting is to make *enough* sense of the issues to place them on the board, not to fully understand the problem. The issues are assigned to individuals and thus organized for future action and *possibly* for further analysis and resolution. This situational management, despite some ambiguousness, creates a sort of predictability in terms of what is expected of the actors here and now but also in terms of the onward management of the issues, in that it is made sure that they will be handled.

The achieved predictability and use of the board is possible due to the nature of the unexpected issues; the issues are rooted in the daily work of the project team, rather than caused by externals, and are within their space of action; thus, the issues are 'accessible' for the team. In a sense, the routine activity and routinization absorb the unexpected events, and the actors become able to (re-)establish intersubjectivity and situational predictability.

The concept of *uncertainty absorption* (Hällgren & Söderholm, 2010; Seidl & Becker, 2005) seems relevant for understanding the *function* of routines and routinization in this project setting. The concept is, for instance, used by Schoeneborn et al. (2014) who argue that decisions 'permit the absorption of uncertainty: Every decision takes "responsibility" for the risks associated with the selection' (Schoeneborn et al., 2014, p. 293). In the same way, the 'machine' here excludes some actions or options but makes others relevant, and thus it is constructing but also limiting the actors' action space.

In project studies, the concept of 'absorption' has also previously been used in relation to deviations. Hällgren and Söderholm (2010, p. 355) note that 'the ability to absorb deviations … is determined by the degree of responsiveness and distinctiveness'. This implies that project actors need to both make sense of the deviation (distinctiveness) and find appropriate ways of organizing actions (responsiveness), and in this way absorb uncertainty. This corresponds with the action patterns identified in this analysis. In Meeting 1, the routine meeting and the routinized interaction absorb uncertainty, in the sense that they contain unexpectedness and attempt to prevent future unpredictably so as to limit uncertainty for the project team members. Hickson, Hinings, Lee, Schneck, & Pennings (1971, p. 220) has previously noted that organizations 'do not necessarily aim to avoid or nor completely reduce uncertainty but instead find ways to absorb it', such as through risk management or daily project meetings. But this 'absorption' is also *only* possible due to the nature of the (expected) unexpectedness, since the issues can be categorized as manageable, are understandable qua membership knowledge, and are within the action space of the actors. These matters enable the actors to understand and organize actions in situ without more information being required. However, when response actions need to be accomplished after the meeting further information

may be necessary. In practice, these findings are important, because they demonstrate that actors have resources to 'rely on' in the face of uncertainty.

These analytical findings contribute to the existing literature on unexpected project events by using the concept of routines to rethink patterns of management activities and by empirically demonstrating that the management of these events can be routinized. Previously, patterns of actions in deviating situations have been revealed (Hällgren, 2007; Hällgren & Söderholm, 2010; Söderholm, 2008); however, this study expands on these by not 'only' showing patterns of activities and action (which some would categorize as routines) but also that actors themselves orient towards the management of the unexpected as routine.

In addition, the findings emphasize the need for awareness of local contingencies – both in terms of empirical analysis and in terms of how we conceptualize routines. The analysis made clear that local circumstances such as the level of uncertainty, the complexity of problem resolution, as well as the in situ resources available influence actors' categorizations of unexpected events, which in turn has practical consequences for the actual handling of the specific deviations. Previously, Hällgren and Maaninen-Olsson (2005, p. 17) found that 'the uncertainty and ambiguity that deviations cause lead to different actions, dependent on various knowledge, aimed at resolving the situation'. Building on this, my findings suggest that uncertainty is directly connected to spaces of action as well as knowledge and thus that the root of the problem matters greatly. That is, with type 1 (expected unexpectedness), as team members possess knowledge about their own work, they are positioned to understand internally rooted issues, and it is possible for them to respond to the problem themselves – and even produce routines to manage these and thereby (further) reduce uncertainty (both in terms of knowledge of the issues and about what is being done to amend these). For type 2 (unexpected unexpectedness), that being externally caused issues, there is greater uncertainty, since there is less knowledge about the problem and less direct influence. Thus, we see that the local contingencies influence the possibilities to manage unexpectedness as well as the emergence of routines.

Continuing this line of thought, the findings seem to have implications for the concept of routines, as they show that routines are resources that can emerge, be relied on, and used in situations of change, and not only in 'stable' contexts. The field of project studies rarely considers routines, as section 3.1.1.3 showed, but this analysis suggests that it would be relevant for future studies of project practices to further explore the function of routines. In particular, the understanding of routines as being dynamic and flexibly performed can help us understand how routines enable actors to make sense of and actually accomplish their work in practice, despite obstacles. In Chapter 9 we will return to further discuss the implications for the concept of routines.

In relation to this, the analysis showed that even though organizations and organizational actors attempt to manage environmental complexity and to limit the uncertainty that arises at the project level, not all types of unexpectedness can be foreseen or identified as risks. On the contrary, there appears to be a discrepancy

between organizational demand for planning, control, and tight deadlines and the practitioners' awareness of uncertainty and possible unforeseen issues. This is a practical problem that can cause actors to trade speed for accuracy in situations where accuracy would be preferred. Actors and organizations must thus continuously work to find a balance between ensuring sufficient planning and control and allowing for flexibility and continuous modification of plans as situational contingencies emerge.

In Chapter 9 we will return to reflect on these matters in relation to how MLIT approach project management today, as the organization, since the data was collected, has begun a process to become more agile.

7.3.3 Type 2: Unexpected unexpectedness

In the second meeting, the problems that emerged are treated as *unexpected unexpectedness* (type 2), and thus treated differently than the unexpected issues (type 1) in the first meeting. Here, the unexpected issue has not emerged from the work of the project team but was instead caused by external actors and is *only* accessible through the story of the project manager. It is through routine meeting situation that enables the project manager's framing of the issue *as unexpected* and of *what* the unexpected is that the actors collectively establish intersubjectivity of the situation. The analysis demonstrated that in situations of disruptions routine activities and stories can be used as resources to construct collective understanding of complex deviations.

In Meeting 2, the story is made possible because the actors participate in a routine meeting, oriented towards as such in situ, and because the team members continuously align with the actions taken by the project manager and seemingly treat these actions as familiar and expected/ordinary in the type of setting. The unexpected unexpectedness in Meeting 2 is constructed as a *wicked* problem (Grint, 2005), contrary to the actors in the first meeting who constructed the issues as *tame*. Wicked problems are defined as complex, 'often intractable', and problematic, in that 'any apparent 'solution' often generates other 'problems' (Grint, 2005, p. 1473) and, accordingly, they often require longer collective processes of meaning-making in order for decisions to be reached. In the same way, we see how the unexpected problem is framed as involving many actors, without any clear solutions, and without a right answer or great outcome and thus framed as and situationally produced as complex to solve.

Through the story, boundaries are also constructed: firstly, in terms of categorizing the team members at the meeting as *the* project team and others as outside of that project team; secondly, by framing the issue as complex and as out of the team's control, boundaries 'around' their action space are created. The team members are made to be bystanders to the problem, not active problem solvers: The actions, talk, and activities in the story are taking place somewhere else, away from the team and their work. The unexpected problem is positioned as caused by external actors, contrary to the first team where the unexpected issues

were rooted in their ongoing work tasks. Considering this in regard to Hällgren and Maaninen-Olsson's (2005) notion of responsiveness and distinctiveness, here there is not a possibility for responsiveness, and thus the actors' focus is on identifying distinctiveness, possibly enabling actions at a later point if necessary.

Complimenting previous studies that find stories to be an important sensemaking resource for leaders (Havermans et al., 2015; Musca et al., 2014), the findings of this analysis suggest that formal project managers (or leaders in general) are in unique positions to influence the collective process of sensemaking due to their epistemic status and institutional role. Considering the project manager's construction of boundaries, his epistemic status, as well as his influential position in terms of impacting sensemaking, the project manager can be understood as a 'gatekeeper', choosing how to inform the team about the unexpectedness and thus both framing how to understand it, including the type of unexpectedness, and framing the action space that they as a team have available.

Although the team dealing with the second type of unexpectedness cannot influence the deviation, it is clear that they do still have an action space in regard to their ongoing work, which appear to not have been directly impacted by the unexpectedness. After the story, the team's focus returns to their ongoing activities, suggesting that the unexpectedness is contained for now; they have sufficient understanding of what it is, how it impacts, and what they as team members can do and not do. Thus the meeting functions as a space to produce sensemaking that can contain uncertainty, although the issue is not solvable for these actors.

As the uncertainty about what the unexpected problem means for the project has been 'contained', the actors can instead (re)establish situational predictability in terms of their work. It seems relevant to consider this in relation to the concept of *loose coupling* (Orton & Weick, 1990), which has previously been used in a project context by Hällgren and Söderholm (2010). The analytical findings here compliment those of Hällgren and Söderholm (2010), who showed loose coupling to be a mechanism that enables projects to proceed despite severe deviations. The empirical findings here also show that it is possible to separate ongoing internal tasks from the unexpected problem, especially if it is, as is the case here, externally caused and not directly connected to the team's daily tasks. The decoupling and dependence on other actors to solve the problems means that the team can be in a sort of 'limbo' for a time, while the issue is discussed/solved/identified by externals. Meanwhile, the team can go on with much of their ongoing/planned work, but they do so with great uncertainty because the project might be disrupted. In contrast, the issues discussed in Meeting 1, although less severe, have a direct impact on ongoing work and cannot as such be decoupled (at least not for long), which is clear from the fact that the issues need to be talked about and solved from day to day.

Considering this second type of unexpectedness in relation to the concept of routines, it is clear that there are substantial differences in comparison to type 1 unexpectedness, but also similarities. In Meeting 2, the actors cannot draw on routinized actions to *organize* action, but the routine meeting activity functions as a

space within which understandings of the problems can be produced. As such the routine functions as a mechanism for handling the situational uncertainty.

This analysis, as well as the review of project literature on unexpectedness (section 2.3.2), makes it clear that projects have dependencies or variables that the actors cannot control. For instance, when work is outsourced to vendors, as in these projects, an aspect of vulnerability is introduced, since work in other organizations is less transparent and less controllable; thus, an additional aspect of complexity is added to the project setting (Olson & Olson, 2000). As the empirical analysis of Meeting 2 demonstrates, to *not* have a comprehensive risk overview creates uncertainty and a risk of unexpected events, as it is not possible to take specific precautions. However, it does not seem likely that the actors can consider or have an overview of all possible contingencies in practice. In fact, a full overview of contingencies could in theory generate more uncertainty to be experienced, as it would create awareness of everything that could possibly go wrong. In that sense, distributed setups and vendor collaborations are inherently uncertain and ambiguous, since the actors need to find a balance between control and trust – we will explore this further in Chapter 8.

The empirical demonstration of unexpected events illustrates that due to the complexity of projects and organizations, it is not realistic to expect that projects in practice can be managed according to long-term plans by relying on methods such as risk management, and controlling mechanisms. If this was the case, these measures would ensure the unexpected issues would never have occurred.

As Suchman (1985, p. 28) points out, plans are 'inherently vague', since they are 'designed to accomodate the unforseeable contingences of situated action'(p. 4), and although they construct situational predictability (and continuously do when reviewed and agreed upon), they do not predict how the project will unfold. Thus, we need to, as the project actors in fact appear to do already, consider plans as flexible because we can only 'guestimate' what will happen. Previously, De Meyer, Loch, and Pich (2002) found that *unforeseen uncertainties* 'make people uncomfortable because existing decision tools do not address them' (p. 2), which also seems to be the case in Meeting 2, where there is no apparent resolution to the problem and consequently no reduction of the uncertainty regarding the project's future. Here, the plans are no longer of relevance, but at some point they need to be re-evaluated due to the new circumstances. As De Meyer et al. point out, due to the uncertainty it is 'impossible to create a complete contingency plan, the plan must evolve as the project progresses' (2002, p. 66). This practical problem is evidently also oriented towards by the project managers in interviews and observations, as they highlight the necessity of risk management and continuously 'sniffing out issues', as one project manager phrased it. In Meeting 1, the team do not as such 'foresee uncertainties', rather they seem to expect (or foresee) that *something* unexpected will occur, and as a result the actors plan from day to day what they need to focus on, most likely continuously aligned with a more long-term plan. Thus, in practice, they treat (short-term) plans as flexible.

In line with these thoughts and as previous research suggests, it may also be relevant to address unexpected events or risks in more positive terms than theory usually does. Perminova et al. (2008) find that

researchers have ‘focused on identifying and prescribing ways managers can either reduce or absorb the negative consequences of environmental uncertainty’, but that we instead need to consider that ‘firms do not necessarily get negative impact from uncertainty and risks; they can create opportunities out of it’ (Perminova et al., 2008, p. 75). In cases, where uncertainty does not inhibit action, but can be managed or ‘absorbed’, unexpectedness can be positive in the sense that it allows actors to review the situation and seek alternatives and sometimes better solutions.

Finally, although the unexpected event in the second meeting was not expected, the analysis of the first meeting and the observations and interview suggest that actors do expect some types of unexpected matters to occur and treat uncertainty as an inherent aspect of their work. As Hällgren and Maaninen-Olsson (2005) note: ‘deviations, uncertainty, and ambiguity were natural parts of project life, so natural that their occurrence was not seen as a surprise’ (p. 20). Although expected in theory, due to inherent uncertainty it seems that the actors find that some matters produce more uncertainty than others. This connects to previous findings showing that actors’ experience level matters in terms of what they consider expected or unexpected:

> The level of expectedness usually follows with experience. The more experienced an individual is, the greater the likelihood is that he/she is able to see events coming. The opposite also applies: less experienced individuals have relative of the experienced individuals a narrower frame of reference and are thus more likely to experience an event as unexpected. (Jacobsson & Hällgren, 2016, p. 585)

In that sense, ‘newcomers’ are somewhat dependent on ‘old-timers’ in regard to understanding *what* is to be expected as unexpectedness, which underlines the work setting as being constructed by the team as a psychologically safe space for learning the distinctions (Edmondson, 2010) that are important for membership of the particular type of community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Thinking about this in terms of membership suggests that project practitioners can display membership competences by being able to treat some types of unexpectedness in a routinized manner as well as by demonstrating which types should not be treated as expected. Thus, in this perspective, the categorization of events as expected unexpectedness or unexpected unexpectedness is in that sense a matter of experience and the development of membership competence, and it is through this membership that management of the unexpected can become routinized.

7.3.4 Final remarks

The analysis demonstrates that unexpectedness is constructed, understood, and responded to differently depending of the situation and type of unexpectedness. The section shows that actors draw on routine activities, routinized interaction, and/or discursive resources to collectively make sense of unexpected events in situ and that they, based on this understanding, can identify relevant actions and non-relevant actions. y

paying close attention to the micro level, the analysis reveals the ongoing interactional work of producing routine activities as recognizable *as such* and the situational attentiveness and coordination required to produce routinized talk within the routine activity. Thus, the analysis here empirically contributes to the routine dynamics field, and by showing how routines can emerge due to uncertainty, it calls into question the (implicit) understanding in the field that routines, although flexibly performed, are primarily found in stable settings. Thus, although there is an apparent contradiction between routines and unexpectedness, routines are in fact valuable sensemaking and organizing resources in managing the unexpected – although not sufficient for all types of unexpectedness.

Thus, in line with previous literature, this analysis finds that, in practice, projects are not stable, controlled entities (Hällgren et al., 2012) and further concludes that order as is locally achieved from situation to situation.

I also find it relevant to note that although this analytical chapter showed two types of unexpected events and the situated practices of handling these, this is not an exclusive list. It may be very possible that there are other types of unexpectedness and practices that have not yet been identified. Thus, rather than concluding the two types to encompass all unexpectedness, I suggest to consider this analysis as a starting point and that future research should attempt to develop this framework, perhaps by finding other types. Future studies may also reveal that we cannot address unexpected issues as types but should perhaps instead treat them as changeable positions on a continuum. From this perspective, unexpected events could be addressed as dynamic and moveable in the continuum depending on the situated sensemaking and evolvement of the issues. The outer positions of such a continuum should be identified qua members' orientation, and thus such a continuum could and should not be generalizable but would provide understanding in the specific cases.

In this analytical chapter, we again saw how closely integrated and interdependent the projects are on the vendors and how problems in the project have direct consequences for the customer (i.e. the business side). However, despite these observations, we have yet to explore how these different actors collaborate and navigate in what seems to be complex professional relationships, where differences in organizational attachments, knowledge areas, competences, and goals and interest might create challenges in practice. We will attend to these matters as we move on to the final analytical chapter.

Finally, before we move on to the third analysis, I want to connect the above findings of the relation between membership competences and categorizations of unexpected events to my own experiences as an industrial PhD student.

In much the same way as the project actors learn to differentiate and produce relevant categories, throughout my time in the MLIT organization I have learnt to differentiate between the completely unexpected and expected unexpected. For instance, the cyberattack in 2017, which disrupted the daily operations of all business units, was and should be treated as a major and completely unexpected event. In

contrast, in the beginning of my employment at the organization, I was surprised several times by yet another organizational change. However, after a while, I (qua my new experience) learnt to expect these regularly, although I did not know when to expect them. Reflecting on this, it becomes clear to me that this *concerns* the process of a 'newcomer' moving towards increased understanding and towards becoming a member (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Similarly, as the project manager of this PhD project, I learnt to expect changes, especially during the fieldwork, where I needed to be flexible and re-evaluate my plans (e.g. when observations in other locations were cancelled at the last minute). In these cases, I did what was within my own action space to find a new solution and also elicited the help of others in arranging other observations. In that way, I made use of others' membership experience, knowledge, and competences to manage these unexpected issues.

8 Analysis 3: Producing Belonging

The previous analytical chapters have explored how project actors manage the uncertainty and complexity of their work setting, and this interest is continued in this third analytical chapter. Here, we will turn our focus to the collaborative relationships amongst project partners.

Whereas the previous analyses demonstrated how internal project teams produce order and how projects are exposed to unexpected events due to close interrelations with vendors, other projects, etc., this section will explore the project teams' seemingly complex relationships with the two primary partners: the vendors and the business. In particular, the analysis is driven by an interest in how identification processes unfold within global, intra-, and interorganizational project settings and what difference specific identifications make for the work process. This analytical chapter seeks to contribute to answering the central research question by exploring the two following questions:

5. In complex projects, how do project actors make sense of relations?
6. In complex projects, how do project actors situationally produce identifications as members of the projects or the organizations?

Identification is a theoretical concept (section 3.2) and to explore how identification processes unfold in practice, this analysis will attend to the categorization work and the interactional resources the project actors deploy to construct (different kinds of) identification, thereby making it possible to discuss identification in intra- and interorganizational teams.

Previous studies have left unexplored how identifications are produced in situ, but at the same time they have suggested that identification is an important factor for productivity and control of uncertainty (Bartel, 2001; Borgen, 2001; Ellis & Ybema, 2010; Fiol & O'Connor, 2005; Huemer et al., 2004), emphasizing why it is important to understand in detail how identifications are produced.

The analytical chapter is structured as follows: Firstly, findings from a content analysis of the interviews and observational material will be presented. Hereafter follows the micro-analysis, which is divided into three sections. Finally, the analytical findings will be considered in relation to existing theory, and the contributions of the analysis will be discussed.

8.1 Observations of and Reports about Relations

During the data collection process, I became aware of the network of relationships that the actors engage in. Most obviously, the project team members interact with each other, with vendors, with the business side (the customer), and with other internals working on other projects. Besides this, the actors are in contact with actors in other organizational units such as the finance department, the project management office, etc. as well as executive stakeholders. The projects in this empirical setting are for the most part both intra- and interorganizational projects (section 5.1).

When I carried out the interviews with the internal project managers, the relations with both the vendors and the business were frequently mentioned as challenging and even as 'pain points' for some. The relations thus seemed to be *experienced* as a challenge. Of course, without the collaborations the projects would not be achieved, and thus they are important, even if they are constantly producing practical challenges. Intra- and interorganizational projects are ambiguous settings that, as previous theory illustrates, offers organizational advantages as well as practical problems (Dyer & Singh, 1998).

8.1.1 Intra-organizational collaboration: Negative perceptions

The relationship between the project team and the business side is central for the projects. The term 'the business' is an emic term used by members of the IT organization. Depending on the situation, the business side is used to cover the overall 'business organization', and in other situations it is used to describe the 'business side' of a specific project.

With regard to the projects, the business is the 'customer' who funds and requests a project for the IT organization to deliver. However, for the IT organization and, subsequently, for the project teams to be able to produce and deliver projects, the business side needs to be involved in terms of defining the project, delivering the relevant knowledge, and testing the final 'product'. Despite it being the IT project teams who are responsible for the project, a continuous interaction between the partners is required. The business side possess important knowledge, as well as opinions, that needs to be shared with the IT team in order to ensure the relevance of the project, alignment of expectations, etc.

At the time of observation, the projects were primarily driven and organized according to a waterfall structure (Griffin & Roldan, 2013), which means that the business is primarily involved in the start-up and end phase of the projects, and not as much in the phase where the development work is executed. Thus, in the observed projects; the business is not very involved in the ongoing work, although they are regularly updated on progress and status. The project teams, or at least the project manager in most instances, have weekly meetings with the business side.

The observations demonstrated that in an organization of this size, the actors have different access to, different relationships with, and alternating perceptions of other organizational units and actors. Local access and face-to-face-options allowed for some projects to have tight integration between the business and IT side. I observed one project where one of the project managers was located with the business in their office building, while the IT team was located with the rest of the IT organization in another building. The intent was to allow for smooth integration and collaboration and for the project manager to act as a liaison. In this instance, limited distance between offices made this arrangement possible. However, most of the IT project managers do not co-locate with the business side, even when the possibility is there (e.g. even if both parties are located in Copenhagen); instead, the two parties remain at their own offices, and although they sometimes meet face-to-face, most of the time they merely call each other.

In some projects, for instance, where the project team is located in the USA and the business side is primarily located in Denmark, the project partners have less direct access to one another, as they cannot meet face-to-face and have challenges interacting synchronously in meetings due to a substantial time difference. The observations in different locations thus illustrated the local variances and the different restrictions and possibilities that location in itself presented with regard to facilitating collaboration between business and IT.

During the observations and interviews, it became evident that the relationship between IT and the business were not without problems. Several interviewees, although not all, explained that they felt that the business side treated them as 'vendors' rather than as members of the same organizational group and that the business organization seemed to have a negative perception of the IT organization. Maria, a project manager who previously worked in the business, states:

> I think we need to build better relationships with the business, … I know when I was with the business I was very frustrated with IT because they didn't deliver … so I think there is this perception from the business that we are not able to deliver. (Maria, project manager)

Maria's perception of the relationship is mirrored in this statement from an interview with the programme manager Hans:

> I sense that we as an organization isn't perceived very positively in the headquarter, that we, and I don't know it this is just, do not deliver the projects on time. (Hans, programme manager. Translated from Danish)

Hans expands on this statement with an example illustrating that IT teams often need to negotiate with the business with regard to delivery times, scope, etc. because the business and the IT team, qua their professional specializations, have different needs and understandings regarding how long activities do/should take. He suggests that the lack of IT insight on the business side produces unrealistic expectations about time

spans and deliveries, which makes it difficult to align on time schedules, expectations, etc. – matters that once *again* become problematic if unexpected events delay the project.

The interview quotes make clear the perception in the IT organization that the business think of them as not fully capable. Thus, the IT teams (think they) are faced with a priori understandings of their abilities (or lack thereof), and in that sense the relationship is negatively influenced from the very beginning.

The interview quotes implicitly make relevant the organizational belonging of the business side and the project team, as these clearly illustrate that the interviewee orients towards the business as *external* from the IT organization. However, this is ambiguous, since the actors are also frustrated with this lack of collective identification or at least better collaboration. However, what differences this lack of collective identification and the (apparent) negative perception make in practice is not yet clear. As the analytical section moves forward, it is interesting to examine how the situated collaboration between the business and the project team unfolds and consider how the actors produce belonging.

8.1.2 Interorganizational collaboration: The challenge of becoming a team

The observations made it very clear to me how important the vendors are for the execution of the projects, since they are assigned substantial areas of project work. To facilitate the work in the project teams (both internals and vendors), many teams have either daily or weekly/bi-weekly meetings where they give updates on status, progression, challenges, etc. and share relevant knowledge. It is often in these meetings that critical or difficult matters are discussed.

The most-used vendors in this organization are located in India. Some teams do use very specialized vendors located in Europe, but these are few and far between. The consequence of the geographical distance between the vendors and internal teams is that they rarely meet face-to-face but instead communicate primarily through ICT, such as chat, email, phone, or online conference systems. At the time of observation, video meetings were rarely used, as the vendors in general had very limited access to meeting rooms with video equipment. This means that the project actors, sitting at different locations and hired by different companies, are necessitated to establish collaboration without meeting face-to-face or seeing each other on video. Some projects do get funds to travel to meet the vendor team, but that is not an option for all projects. Instead, to facilitate smooth collaboration during the development work, some vendors place a vendor representative 'onshore' with the internal project team. I was told of several projects that had a vendor representative with them for a few months, but I only 'captured' one of these instances during my observations.

The interviews illustrated that in some projects the relationship and collaboration with the vendors is particularly challenging. One of the interviewed project managers, Simon, explained about the relation to the vendor CorpConsult:

> It can also become sort of a them-and-us culture in the different locations, especially because CorpConsult is our vendor, we are their customer right, and it would be good to be integrated some more, so that we saw it as a joint project, that can be a challenge. (Simon, project manager. Translated from Danish)

Furthermore, Simon experienced it to be a challenge to find a balance between trust in and control of the vendor team:

> Trust, it is sort of double, because on one side, I think that if you don't have trust in people, then I doesn't make sense at all to have these people on board, so fundamentally I think you need to have trust, but then again I also like to be in control of what is going on, and that involves getting updated information about how things are going, and then you can say, if I had more trust in the team, then I wouldn't have daily meetings. (Simon, project manager. Translated from Danish)

Although not all projects had problems with the vendors, Simon and others found that they needed to control task progress and that it was difficult to work across organizational boundaries and across distances. In particular, they find that it makes it more difficult to manage project progress and facilitate knowledge sharing.

These challenges with distributed collaboration are not uncommon; according to previous studies, the lack of synchronous interaction and lack of passive face time can have direct consequences for collaboration and perceptions of collaboration partners (Elsbach et al., 2010) as well as negative consequences for trust (Kimble, 2011), as Simon also experienced. In the interview, Simon emphasizes that it would 'be good' to be more integrated, to perceive the work as a 'joint project'. Even though the team and the vendor employees work together on the project, Simon does not experience them as an integrated team with a joint goal. He does not explicate what sort of difference it would make if they were more integrated or how they could work towards this, but clearly experienced the collaboration as challenging. Thus, Simon seems to be struggling with the ambiguity of the collaboration and relation, in that he wants it to be more trusting and inclusive but also believes that there is a need to control the vendors' work. This ambiguity seems to be directly related to the cross-organizational and virtual setup.

Contrary to Simon's experience, other project managers explicated how they have actively worked to produce integration between the vendor team and the internal team and how that process changed their perception of the vendor. Here, Maria tells about her team's collaboration with the vendor:

> there was a lot of frustration about how we should communicate and things like this, so my suggestion was then to say "well, we need to go and visit them and we need see them and we need to build a relationship with them", so myself and the other project managers went to India … we met with the team, we had a team building day where we went out to the beach … we said we are gonna go have fun and

> break down some of the barriers and from my side I think it is very important that we don't see it as us and them, they are not our vendor, they are not somebody else, they are part of our team, and that's the approach I've taken from the beginning. (Maria, project manager)

Maria found that in the start-up of her project there was difficulty in finding the 'best' way to collaborate, and in order to overcome this she and others associated with the project went to meet the vendor team in India and 'break down some of the barriers'. They met face-to-face at the vendor's location, which also gave her an insight into the work setting of these vendor team members. Thus, she took action to improve the relationship and found that that effort positively influenced the collaboration. Additionally, she highlights the importance of not thinking in terms of 'us and them' (as Simon also highlighted as problematic) but instead treating the vendors as part of the project team.

As is clear both of the project managers here were quite explicit about issues caused by ambiguity about 'belonging', although their approach to sorting out the issues differed.

As the above section makes clear, the project actors are required to produce effective collaborations with different stakeholders and navigate in complex relationships. Furthermore, even though the study only includes one organization, there are great variances in relationships, options, restrictions, and ways of collaborating, which suggests that practical contingencies and personal preferences influence how the project actors – the vendors, project team members, and business side representatives - relate to each other. This implies that situational contexts matter and that it is difficult to draw generalized conclusions about the relationships. Instead, the next section will explore how actors situationally produce identifications and how they orient to and construct boundaries between organizations or actors.

8.2 Micro-Analysis: Producing Identifications

We now turn from retrospective and observational accounts of the relations in projects to explore situational identification processes and what influence identifications have on the collaboration and work in intra- and interorganizational projects. The analysis will examine interactions in project meetings between vendors, the internal project team, and the business side in order to show how the actors make sense of relations and how identifications are constructed in situ in these project contexts, which reportedly are relationally ambiguous spaces.

The micro-analysis is organized according to phenomena in focus and is structured as follows: Firstly, we will explore the vendor–project team relationship and the interactional resources with which categorizations (and subsequent identifications) are situationally accomplished. Secondly, building on the first section, we will consider the ambiguousness of 'belonging' in interorganizational project collaborations and how actors

produce membership of different categories at the same time. Finally, we will examine the business side–project team relations and show how actors use categorization work and entitlements to negotiate influence within the project setting.

This analysis draws on meeting excerpts from several different meetings and will not, in line with Analysis 1, provide comprehensive introductions to the projects; rather, to place main focus on the interactional aspects, the analysis will only include the most relevant contextual information that enables the reader to understand what is taking place in the meeting excerpts.

8.2.1 Interactional identification resources

In the first section, we will examine how internal project team members and vendor team members working on the same project collectively produce categorizations of themselves and others, and subsequently which identifications they produce and how. The analysis will especially focus on resources used in this process.

8.2.1.1 *Excerpt 12: 'let us take a look at the board then'*

The first excerpt is from a daily virtual meeting between the internal project team and the vendors working on the project. The internal project team members are distributed between Denmark and the UK and the vendor is located in India. The internals in Denmark, where the meeting was recorded, are not gathered in a meeting room but instead sit at their individual desks and call in. The meeting is a so-called WebEx call, where the participants can hear each other's voices and see a shared screen. On the screen is a virtual Kanban board, which the project team uses to organize and track work activities. Speaking in this excerpt is Adam (AD), the internal project manager, and Saransh (SA), the vendor team manager.

In this excerpt, it is relevant to notice the actors' use of the virtual resource and how they unproblematically talk about specifics in the project work.

Excerpt 12

3	AD:	okay (1.0) ↑let us take a look at the board then development work starting
4		with the production support e s b services↘ Saransh
5		(1.0)
6	SA:	yeah adam this is regarding the ( ) (commitment) card ( ) so pradeep has
7		started regression testing on that
8		(1.0)
9	AD:	{moves cursor from one card to another}
10	SA:	eh (.) so once we see the outcome then we will

11 AD: {moves cursor from card to another}
12 SA: discuss
13 AD: {moves cursor back to the initial card}
14 SA: >the first card< in the eh yeah yeah
15 AD: this one↗
16 AD: {clicks and new window opens}
17 SA: yeah that's the one (.) yes (.) so pradeep has started testing on that

Here, the talk about specific work activities and the use of the virtual workflow resource, including the movements of the cursor, are resources for producing and demonstrating membership of the category 'project team'.

In line 3, Adam makes a request designed as a suggestion ('let us take a look at the board') and directs the others' attention to the relevant theme on the board ('the development work') and then to a specific topic within that theme ('production support esb services', line4). He then selects a relevant next-speaker by mentioning his name ('Saransh'). By selecting topics and speakers, Adam can be seen as performing the situational identity of chair (Angouri & Marra, 2010).

Adam's turn indicates that he assumes that the others know what he is referring to when he talks about the board, development work, and production support. He thereby displays that he takes for granted that this knowledge is known by the others due to their involvement in the project. Following Garfinkel and *the economy rule*, which states that 'a single category term from any MDC (membership categorization device) can in principle do adequate reference' (Schegloff, 2007, p. 471) (parentheses added), we can take this taken-for-granted knowledge and the mentioning of category-relevant terms as adequate for the participants and for us as observers to categorize the speakers as 'project members' (Garfinkel, 1967); thus, both the vendor employees and internal team members are categorized as members of the project and thus as relevant for the ongoing project work. As Housley (2000, p. 87) notes 'What "collection" the category belongs to, and what the collection is, are constituted in and how it is used this time'. Thus, categories and collections are not static, but are instead situationally and contextually bound (Stephen Hester & Eglin, 1997) – they are accomplished situationally when relevant through resources such as demonstrations of knowledge and 'work talk', as we see here.

In the next turn, Adam's categorization is ratified, since Saransh demonstrates very project-specific project knowledge: In line 6, Saransh takes the turn, accepting Adam's speaker selection and proceeding to explain about a specific card on the board. As there are no objections, we must assume that Saransh is talking about a card that is relevant in relation to 'production support', as Adam requested. Saransh exhibits an understanding of what Adam referred to and of the ongoing activities, as well as knowledge of the status of the tasks. To display such specific knowledge can be taken as a *category predicate* (Whittle et al., 2014); that is, it is treated as associated with that category. Saransh not only claims project knowledge, he also

demonstrates it through the dialogue with Adam. This demonstration is an important indicator of membership, as there is a tremendous difference in demonstrations and claims in relation to categorizations; demonstrations *show* one to be part of the projected category, whereas claims remain open to the ratification or rejection of others (Garfinkel, 1967). Thus, by engaging in the activity and demonstrating knowledge, Saransh produces a categorization of himself as a *project member* and is consequently confirming the categorization produced by Adam.

In the following lines (9–17), membership of the project team category is produced through embodied interaction using the virtual tool. Adam and Saransh both demonstrate themselves to be project members through the attention to and movements of the on-screen cursor as well as the closely coordinated talk. In lines 9–11, Adam begins to move the cursor on the screen, moving it from one card to another, hovering over them, while Saransh (lines 10–12) simultaneously continues his explanation. In line 14, it becomes apparent that Saransh understands Adam's cursor movements as an attempt to find the card that Saransh is talking about, observable as he directs Adam to the right card, which Adam simultaneously selects in line 13 and then asks for confirmation of correctness (line15). As Saransh confirms (line16), Adam at the same time opens the card by clicking on it with the cursor; the talk and cursor action are thus closely coordinated.

Saransh and Adam collaborate to achieve the 'cursor project' before Saransh continues with his own turn project. The opening of the card prompts Saransh to repeat his explanation that 'Pradeep has started testing on that' (line17), showing that the cursor actions are also influencing Saransh's talk; he recycles his turn, possibly orienting towards the fact that Adam (visible through the cursor) is preoccupied with the opening of the card.

Despite different formal organizational ties, Adam and Saransh are both actively engaged in the project tasks represented by the board. Through this, they are situationally producing and making relevant the category of 'project members interacting with the board', which is subsequently part of the collection 'project team'. The engagement with the board allows them to not only accomplish the practical work at hand but also to display their membership of the project. Even though Adam is the overall project manager, it is Saransh who must direct him to the correct card, and Saransh thereby displays a highly involved expert role. The board is thus not just something the internal project team has created in order to keep track of their own and vendor tasks, rather it is actively used by all of those working on the project, including the vendor team. The board enables visual coordination and supports verbal coordination of the work and facilities the interorganizational knowledge sharing that is taking place. As previously noted (Analysis 2), this type of board can be seen as scaffolding the interaction in which the work is discussed and coordinated. The excerpt makes it clear that the board is both facilitating asynchronous knowledge sharing outside of the meeting as well as the in situ, synchronous knowledge sharing during the meeting.

Looking at the excerpt, without prior knowledge of organizational ties, it would be hard to detect that the two interlocutors are actually working in an interorganizational setting. The actions that the two perform and the content of the talk could as easily be occurring in an interaction between project internals – it seems as routinized and unproblematic as the interaction between internals in the first analytical chapter.

They do not in any way orient towards organizational boundaries or towards differences in engagement or involvement in the project. Their actions require professional and situational knowledge as well as close involvement in the project. Through their talk, the actors quickly and unproblematically produce insight into the *microcontext* of the project (Olson & Olson, 2000), meaning insight into who does what, when, and what remains or is challenging – it is not only an general overview of tasks but it also produces insight into each other's' work practices. While Olson and Olson use the term microcontext in passing, I find it relevant here because it seems that the talk in these meetings is in fact very occupied with the sharing of microcontexts.

Thus, it seems that the two actors here, through their talk and actions, construct strong belongings to the project through *work;* they are in situ performing project work (talk) as relevant in that specific setting and through talk about this work and by using relevant work-organizing resources they are producing the relevant categories and consequently identification as project members. This implies that *work* can be used as a resource in identification construction processes.

8.2.1.2 *Excerpt 13: 'everyone on the development side'*

As we continue with the next excerpt, we build on the findings above and explore how other types of interactional resources are used to produce relevant categories and identifications.

Excerpt 13 is from a weekly status meeting between an internal project team and a vendor team. It is the project manager Greg (GR) and the vendor project manager Vipek (VI) who are talking, but, contrary to the Excerpt 12, a member of the vendor team, Hassan (HA), also contributes. When looking through the recorded meetings, I find that although it is not uncommon for vendor or project team members to contribute in these types of meetings, it is often the managers who dominate the talk.

This particular meeting is a conference call without a shared screen, as many of the recorded meeting are. The meeting participants may have access to a project report shared before the meeting, but I cannot be certain of this.

The excerpt is from the very beginning of the meeting and starts right after greetings have been exchanged. Here, it is relevant to pay attention to the actors' use of pronouns, displays of (presumed) shared knowledge, as well as their references to persons and organizational units.

Excerpt 13

GR: i e:h everyone ehm i think we should crack on ehm ehm (vipek) would you take the lead (.) please
((much static noise and sounds as from tapping on keypad))
(1.0)
VI: ehm yeah fred (.) (starting item one)
? : [(ehm)]
VI: [point one] ( ) (point 7) scope ah ((name?)) looked into that) and he says the final scope which eh which he did and for now we are (point two five six one) and for ( ) development has been started (1.2) and the plan has been shared with m l i t also
(3.5)
VI: i believe it ( )
HA: mm yeah im sure (.) thanks eh (vipek) for that eh just for eh kind of eh the >sake of good order< two five six one reused the scoping added in release two point eleven↘ (.) two point six three complete (archive) has been added in eh release to point eleven↘ (.) the two u a r q s (will) be delivered until s i i mean development (s i t) (and) demo i mean both the ( ) and u a t is not yet planned it needs to be discussed separately without ( ) can ehm business (tend to) u a t and push this particular r q in production (.) the risk associated with this needs to be discussed with the test team ehm and ah ah so that is the current status on release two point eleven (.) the development is in progress and eh only r q two five six three will be delivered (.) late twenty-fourth of march apart from other r q s which are gonna be delivered thirtieth of march in test environment (.) so that is the current on release two point eleven
GR: okay just to just add to that in my discussion with the test team they have a:h asked for an additional week of testing eh a:h to: include ehm ehm those two r q s particularly the late one that comes in on the twenty-fourth↘(.) which i think is acceptable ehm so we will be expecting that there will be an additional week on the (hoat) test time line just for everyone to be aware of especially derek, disha and ashish and everyone on the development side just to be consid- just to consider that i think we were originally eh tempted to be targeting e:h mid june june the fourteenth e:h delivery to production ( ) as it stand at the moment that is more likely to be a twenty-first of june delivery date e:h we wont commit that date to the business until we have launched the current ( ) progress releases it is clearly that if there is any slippage on the fifth tenth of march then (we have) eh an impact on the next set of releases but i will set up communication with the business and confirm what we have agreed on (.) eh any questions (.) if not we can move on

In this excerpt, we see how the actors produce different categories through the use of personal pronouns and by using organizational boundaries as a resource. In terms of identification, the excerpt exemplifies how

identification is not dichotomous (either-or) and that actors can identify as members of multiple categories at the same time.

In line 9, Greg makes an evaluation of what 'we' should do now ('crack on') and then requests Vipek to take the turn. Vipek shows that he understands what 'take the lead' implies, as he begins (line 13) to explain the status of the vendor team's work tasks. There is no objection from Greg at this point, and we can assume that this was the action that Greg expected Vipek to perform.

During his turn, Vipek explains the status of specific 'points', and he ends by underlining that the plan has been shared with MLIT. Vipek's unexplained references to the different points suggest that he takes for granted that this is shared and known knowledge for the participants in this meeting. His turn demonstrates that the vendors are highly involved in specific work tasks, and the reporting sequence suggests that it is relevant for the internal team to be aware of the progress of the different 'points', suggesting tight interdependence between the tasks that the partners work on.

In line 18, Vipek makes organizational boundaries relevant by specifically mentioning that 'the plan' has been shared with MLIT. This shows that the actors are aware of, orienting to, and make relevant their different organizational ties and obligations. Here, organizational boundaries are made relevant in situ, as Vipek needs to point to these in order to display that the work (sharing of the plan) has been performed competently. However, in regard to identification, it is interesting that Vipek says MLIT rather than, for instance, 'you' or the names of the people with whom the plan has been shared. Mentioning MLIT rather than the internal team can be understood as a way to *not* make explicit the organizational boundaries between the participants in the meeting. By referring to MLIT, he produces MLIT as an 'external', depersonalized entity – something different to the participants in this meeting – and simultaneously he produces a dual categorization of himself as 'not MLIT' *and* as a 'project member'.

This shows that actors can be part multiple categories at the same time and that it is situationally dependent which categories/collections are relevant (Sacks, 1995). Lerner and Kitzinger (2007, p. 548) found that 'the selection of even the most straightforward forms of reference … can be a matter of explicit speaker concern and can be carefully fitted to the action of a turn'. Here, the reference to MLIT seems to be an expression of the speaker's concern; the reference does not occur randomly, rather it is situated and occasioned in the talk as *necessary* for the project members to know that the plan has been shared. In that sense, organizational ties are produced as relevant for accomplishing the work, but they can also through the turn design be produced in a way so as to 'minimize the boundaries' rather than point to them.

In line 21, Hassan takes the turn and continues Vipek's update on the status of the 'points'. He continues to keep the turn until in line 33, and during his turn, Hassan refers to several different points and uses a range of terms such as UAT (user acceptance test) and RQs (requirements). For outsiders, these terms might be unintelligible, and especially the number points and what they refer to requires substantial insight into the ongoing project work. As we saw in Excerpt 12, it is clear that membership knowledge is very important for

the accomplishment of the in situ 'work talk'; the situated activity requires overview of activities as well as attention to details and ensures that comprehensive knowledge sharing takes place. Through displays of membership knowledge such as in this excerpt, the vendors categorize themselves as central for the project – a categorization that is implicitly ratified by the invitation to participate in this type of meeting and is more explicitly ratified by the internals' situated facilitation of knowledge sharing.

As Hassan finishes his talk, Greg takes the turn in line 34 and organizational boundaries again become relevant. He delivers supplementary information about others working on the project ('test team'). In line 38, Greg provides an evaluation of a request from the test team as acceptable, thereby signalling how the others should treat this. He then continues to explain how that will impact the project and what specific people (who he names) and the 'development side' (line40) should be aware of. He then makes an assessment of what a realistic date to finish testing is, but he also emphasizes that they will not be explicit about this date to 'the business' (lines 43–44).

In his turn (lines 35–50), Greg produces several different categories, making these different categories relevant for the work as it moves forward. Throughout the turn, Greg refers to the meeting participants (who are working directly on the project) as 'we'. However, he also refers to the 'development side' (often the work carried out by vendors). Previous studies on the use of pronouns and the use of third-party references suggest that the choice of pronoun matters greatly for the practical work that is unfolding through the talk-in-interaction (Land & Kitzinger, 2007; Lerner & Kitzinger, 2007; Schegloff, 1996). By using the plural pronoun 'we', Greg displays that he is speaking on behalf of a collective (Schegloff, 1996), but he then extracts 'the development side' as a specific unit *within* that collective. This is of relevance, as it shows an explicit concern and that the shift in pronoun is relevant for the situated actions taking place (Lerner & Kitzinger, 2007); that is, it is *here* in this particular moment in the talk relevant to point to the development side because it makes a difference in regard to responsibilities and actions that needs to be assigned.

This differentiation is relevant to consider in regard to different *territories of knowledge* (Heritage, 2012). That is, Greg orients to organizational boundaries and shows an understanding of the 'limits of such territories and as showing the maintenance of their boundaries to be a priority concern' (Lerner & Kitzinger, 2007). The vendor and the internals thus have different areas of knowledge (as well as entitlements, authorities, etc.), and the establishment and 'maintenance' of such boundaries are here made relevant to *achieve the work at hand*.

Furthermore, through Greg's turn it becomes clear that there are others who are considered '*not* part of the collective' (i.e. the 'we'). Greg mentions the 'test team' and 'the business': The test team is referred to as 'they' (i.e. as outsiders), and it seems that although the work of this team and the test team is evidently interdependent, the test team are not to be considered members of the project *in situ*. Likewise, the business is positioned as externals and as 'someone' who needs to be managed particularly carefully, suggesting that they have influence on the project. Although Greg and the internal project team in fact share organizational

context with the business, the business is positioned as a 'project external', whereas the vendors are categorized as members of the projects and are included in the collective. This suggests that the shared engagement in the project work is a resource as well as a reason to categorize the vendors as members of the project in situ, and that the vendors' and team members' shared categorization as a 'collective' is more relevant in and important for the accomplishment of the situated interaction than other (possible) categorizations as organizational members.

Transferring this to the concept of identification, we can thus see that identifications are situationally produced and that, in this process, organizational boundaries matter less than daily collaboration. Thus, in this excerpt it seems that the actors unproblematically produce and navigate between different identifications. Ultimately, the analysis shows that identifications are not static matters but are instead continuously produced and reproduced.

8.2.1.3 *Producing identifications: Analytical findings*

The analysis of excerpts 12 and 13 shows how identifications are produced through categorization work, more specifically through the occasioned use of pronouns and references to organizational boundaries as well as situated 'work talk' and the use of work-related tools.

As the analysis demonstrates, the actors display project knowledge and engagement in work talk, which are category predicates, and they can thereby be seen as 'doing being project members' and as categorizing as members of the project. Thus, despite organizational boundaries, the actors construct belonging to each other and the project by establishing membership. Organizational boundaries are not made to be relevant as such, only, as in Excerpt 13, when the boundaries and subsequent formal attachments are important for the in situ organization of the practical work and for outlining spaces of action for the different actors (as we also saw in Analysis 2). In fact, similar to what we saw in Analysis 1, the project members' (that being both internals and vendors here) display of taken-for-granted knowledge; this suggest that they assume to have shared (project) knowledge and that they orient towards each other as members of the same project.

The analysis illustrates that the vendor teams are deeply integrated in the project work and the collective needs to have frequent update meetings, as their work is highly interdependent. In terms of work activities, the vendors are not peripheral but are instead central, and it is this centrality and interdependence that makes the daily or weekly meetings necessary; the team collectively needs to share information and knowledge that are vital for the progression of the projects. Not only is it important for enabling progression of tasks, but the meetings are also spaces or occasions to discuss changes or possible future issues (and possibly avoid unexpected issues such as the one that occurred in Meeting 2 in Analysis 2).

Previous theory has emphasized that projects are temporary organizations (cf. section 2.1) and thus that membership is transitory; however, this analysis suggests that despite this and even though project members

work across organizational boundaries, it is possible to situationally establish a shared *space of belonging* (Nocker, 2009). The actors here have no joint *place* to belong to due to the virtual and interorganizational character of the collaboration, however the project can be constructed as an intangible but shared space of belonging in situ through the categorization work (incl. displays of knowledge) and thus through the identifications as members of the project. In fact, it may be precisely because the positions of the actors are liminal (in that they are work in an intersection between organizations) that they handle this by constructing the projects as spaces of belonging. As we move forward, we will further consider constructions of spaces of belonging, viewing these as situated phenomena rather than retrospective discursive constructions as previous research does (section 3.2.1).

The analysis of these initial excerpts shows that identification is a constitutive process happening in situ rather than being a question of 'identifying with' as a stable position. The analysis further suggests that multiple identifications can be at play simultaneously; that is, the actors' categorical memberships seem to be fluidly produced (if and when the necessary resources are available) when relevant in the situation. In that sense, the actors' identification constructions are thus situated and fluid, as they can be shifted between.

In the following section, we will further explore constructions of identifications, particularly examining how simultaneous or shifting identifications are produced through talk-in-interaction.

8.2.2 Identifications as fluidly produced

In the following section, we will explore the fluidity of identifications by examining categorical shifts and see how the actors produce and navigate between different spaces of belonging. This is important to attend to, not only to better understand identification processes but also to better understand how actors in situated practice in interorganizational projects make sense of relations and navigate in the relational ambiguousness of the settings. Previous studies have suggested that actors in projects and other temporary, liminal work contexts deploy shifting identifications in order to manage working in the intersection between organizations (Ellis & Ybema, 2010). Taking this and the findings above as our vantage point, we will explore below how shifts in categorizations and fluid identifications are actually produced in situ and what these accomplish.

8.2.2.1 *Excerpt 14: 'gvs will need to deliver that'*

This third excerpt is from the same meeting as Excerpt 12. Again it is Saransh (SA), the vendor manager (from the organization GVS), and Adam (AD), the project manager, who talk. To catch the local shifts between categories, it is important here to notice the actors' use of names and shifts between pronouns.

Excerpt 14

AD: and we are running into a new problem↘ (1.0) eh in fact we have probably
already run into a new problem >we just haven't really talked about it< (.)
that is that (0.5) on may the thirty-first we ought to be changing (.) schema
to rate management two (1.0) so i think we actually: >i know< we haven't
discussed this (.) but and i haven't discussed this internally either but i
think we- g v s (.) will need to deliver that↑ because this automation of
corecup is running so late↑ that we are ending up (0.5) .h eh (.) it will
have to be in the same (.) release basically↘
(2.0)
? : ((mumbling in background))
AD: so eh what i suggest↑ is: that (.) later today: let me just ask- verify that
that this is >what we need to do< internally and then (.) ehm i think ehm
(name?) if we could just talk a bit later today [h] (.)
? : [mm]
AD: and see whether we should go ahead (.) and look into this (.) schema change
for rate management↓ it is in connection to the roll out of a f l s↑ i think
an upgrade to six eight (i see it probably already were) or we need to be
calling rate management two instead of rate management one↘
(1.0)
AD: s[o]
SA: [eh] so eh: ↑adam should we eh sync up with eh:: those rates >i mean< in the
current (development) they are putting it into dev and incrementally going to
(>add it to the environment<) should we do the same thing on the same (?)↑ it
is because otherwise (.) why (wouldn't we) be working if eh if they they do
it the (hand overs)↘

In this excerpt, categorizations are produced and shifted between through shifts in pronouns *when* relevant for the practical matters that the actors are trying to accomplish.

In line 1, Adam provides information to the other participants: that 'we' are facing a new problem. He then repairs his utterance by stating that they have already 'run into' the new problem but have not discussed it (line 2). The framing of the problem as well as the following explanation of the nature of the problem suggest that he treats this as new information that is relevant for the meeting participants (Schegloff, 1982). It is clear that the talk is focused on matters that are relevant for members of this project, and not others, and he thereby implicitly categorizes the others as members of the project team, adding to the more explicit categorization of them as a 'we'.

In line 4, he underlines that 'we' have not discussed this topic previously and also that he has not discussed it with anyone 'internally' (line 5). The reference to 'internally' makes it situationally relevant that the meeting participants have different organizational attachments; Adam and his team have access to the

‘internals’, implicitly making relevant their membership of the organization. Thus, it is Adam, and not anyone from the vendor team, who can take discussion with ‘internals’. Through the utterance, Adam unproblematically produces dual categorizations, demonstrating that he categorizes himself as a member of different categories at the same time: as part of the project ‘we’ and as part of the internal organization. Here, Adam does not shift between categories as such, rather he makes an additional category relevant, which allows him to accomplish the explanation he needs to give as a member of the first category.

In lines 5–6, Adam initiates the conclusion with ‘I think we’ but then repairs the ‘we’ to ‘GVS’ (the name of the vendor company). Through the repair, he thus explicitly ‘separates’ GVS from ‘we’. The separation is here specifically connected to the work tasks that need to be performed by GVS and not by the collective ‘we’. Previously, Lerner and Kitzinger (2007) have found that actors use repairs, as in this instance, to shift from one pronoun to another and thereby explicitly formulate specific actions, responsibilities, etc. directly associated with that person or collective. *That* the repair is produced displays the shift in pronoun as a ‘priority matter’ (Lerner & Kitzinger, 2007, p. 550) and that it is necessary to produce the right reference in order to complete the practical purpose of the talking turn – to ensure that a task is delegated to GVS. Thus, as in as in Excerpt 13, the mentioning of the company name/organizational ties is relevant to accomplish the talk but is at the same time designed in such a way so as to ensure that the collective ‘we’ is maintained.

In lines 6–7, Adam moves on to account for why GVS will ‘need to deliver that’. That he produces an account suggests that he orients to the request as requiring an explanation; the initial emphasis on ‘new’ problem (lines 1–2) and the account (‘corecup is running so late’) can be seen as Adam trying to legitimize a request, which he may not be entitled to make, as it is seemingly beyond the agreed plan. To frame it as a *new problem* stresses that is was not predicted, that they could not have considered it in their planning, and, finally, that it (since it is a problem) needs to be solved. Furthermore, that the problem has already been ‘run into’ makes it a pressing issue rather than something they need to attend to in order to avoid future problems.

Hereafter, Adam makes a suggestion (‘what I suggest is that later today’, line 11). He then produces an insert section where he again refers to ‘internally’ and states that he needs to verify ‘what we need to do’ (line 12). Here, the internals are positioned as people he needs to align with, and it is clear that ‘internals’ do have influence on the project. Also, here Adam shifts to use the pronoun ‘we’ again and talk about what ‘we’ need to do; thus, although it is GVS who need to deliver the work, it is positioned within something ‘we’, as an overall team, need to do. GVS is thus dual-categorized as both internal and external to the project, whereas the organizational ‘internals’ are only positioned as influential and external to the project team ‘we’.

In lines 15–19, Adam demonstrates substantial contextual knowledge about the project’s interrelations with the organizational environment. His turn demonstrates what Heritage (2012) refers to as K+ epistemic status. Epistemic status, which we also touched upon in the previous analyses, is a concept that highlights actors’ relative access to a ‘territory of information as stratified between interactants such that they occupy different positions on an epistemic gradient’ (Heritage, 2012, p. 4), that is, as more or less knowledgeable in

that specific area of knowledge. As such, Adam here has relatively more access to the internal organization than the vendors and thus knowledge about what takes place here qua his membership of the organization. Due to this, he can distribute 'in-house' knowledge (Bosch-Sijtsema & Henriksson, 2014) and ensure that the right information is passed on to the 'task-doers'. He is thereby facilitating interorganizational knowledge sharing but also ensuring that the 'right' work is carried out.

In line 20, Adam initiates another turn, but Saransh, in overlap, takes the turn and asks a question about the tasks that Adam has just presented them/GVS with (lines 21–25): He asks for information relevant to actually performing the task, thereby seemingly accepting that the task is relevant for his team qua the membership of the GVS organization. Furthermore, by asking for information, he positions Adam as the one who has an overview of what other internal projects/units are doing and how the different activities relate (K+ status), ratifying his dual categorization of himself and the GVS team as both internals to the project and externals to the MLIT organization.

Furthermore, Saransh constructs (lines 21–25) another 'we' than the overall team 'we' that Adam referred to. The 'we' Saransh talks about here is the 'we' that will perform the task that Adam handed to GVS – it is thus a 'GVS team we'. The task handover consequently makes organizational ties relevant and prompts Saransh to produce the relevant categorization. In addition, the questions display his awareness of the interdependence between different activities or parties working on the project (or related projects), which he has (somewhat of) an understanding of despite being an external. The 'we' and the informed questions thus ratify the dual categorization; Saransh shifts between making multiple categories relevant, showing that identifications are fluidly constructed and situationally dependent.

As is evident from the analysis, categorizations are unproblematically shifted between, and subsequent identifications are fluidly produced in close coordination with the speakers' projects: The actors produce membership of specific categories (the project and organizations) through their work talk and displays of knowledge, but their formal organizational attachments are also made relevant and used as resources to organize work and responsibilities. Although the actors can shift between pronouns, it does not seem as if the categories are shifted between as such; rather, it seems that several categories can be relevant at the same time in the interaction, and thus multiple identifications can be constructed and demonstrated in the same sequence of talk.

8.2.2.2 *Excerpt 15: 'at what point do we get in'*

In the next excerpt, we will explore another instance where multiple categorizations are produced. The excerpt is from a weekly phone meeting between the project manager Jack (JA), the programme manager Simon (SI), and Raymond (RA) and Renan (RE) who are working for the vendor CorpConsult. Raymond is working as the vendor manager, located with the internal project team onsite in Denmark, while Renan and

the rest of the team not participating the phone call are located in India. The excerpt is from the middle of the meeting where the project actors discuss responsibilities of the different involved partners: the project team, CorpConsult, and HBH (a second vendor). Here, it is once again relevant to notice the use and shift of pronouns and names, particularly those shifts produced by Raymond.

Excerpt 15

SI: it sho- it shouldn't be a question of oh it is a technical defect
so we'll look into it because because anything which is an incident which is
outside of the warranty period H B H will be responsible for it
RA: well i i was thinking more in terms of (.) what do they do if at >you know<
at an l one level if they were the first eh you know (percors) of looking at
the defect what what are their >core responsibilities< at what point can we
say establish an l two or the next level of escalation and start bringing in
people a- and [( )] [okay]
JA: [but] there is↑ [i mean] on the run side there is l one l two l
three
RA: =okay
JA: =well there is l ↑zero l one l two l three↘ zero is like the super user .h
one is the help desk two is vic[tor (.) three]
RA: [that is (us then)]
JA: is H B H
RA: okay a- and at what point do we get in↗
JA: =you don't that is what simon is saying
RA: oh we [shouldn't okay okay↘]
JA: [if it is outside of] war- well the expectation is that if it is
outside of warranty period (.) and it's been raised in production (.) HBH
deal with it (0.6) .h now reality says i can't see that really happening but
that is what we are gonna push for

In this excerpt, some actors produce membership of more categories relative to the others, suggesting they are in more liminal positions. These multiple memberships are produced in an effort to produce mutual intelligibility about work responsibilities.

The excerpt opens in the midst of a dialogue: In lines 1–3, Simon explains how he understands the division of responsibilities with regard to issues. He uses a sort of hypothetical speech (different types of hypothetical speech are examined by Holt, 2009, and Simmons & LeCouteur, 2011), that is, speech that has not occurred but is imagined ('oh it is a technical defect so we'll look into it', lines 1–2), to exemplify how

they should *not* proceed. He then concludes that issues 'outside of the warranty period' [11] are the responsibility of HBH. He thereby underlines there to be a difference between the responsibilities inside and outside of the warranty period, and this is thus constructed as an important temporal boundary that in turn makes organizational boundaries relevant in terms of placing responsibilities.

Hereafter, Raymond states that he was 'thinking more in terms of' (line 4), which indicates that he does not find Simon's explanation adequate or that all of his concerns have not been addressed. He then provides an example of a situation and asks what 'they' should do and when 'we' can take actions (line 7). The shift in pronouns suggests a shift in stance, that is, on whose behalf he is talking (Land & Kitzinger, 2007; Lerner & Kitzinger, 2007). Lerner and Kitzinger (2007) have previously emphasized that speakers, by actively shifting between pronouns, 'can move between individual and collective (relational/organizational) responsibility for different types of action' (p. 549). If we did not know that Raymond was a vendor representative, we would most likely assume that the 'we' referred to the project team or the people in the room. However, since the contextual knowledge about the interorganizational collaboration is available to us, we might consider that the 'we' in fact refers to the vendor team and that he, when he shifts from saying 'they' to 'we' likewise in situ shift from categorizing as a member of the local 'we' (who looks at the vendor team as a 'they') to categorizing as a member of the vendor 'we'. If this is the case, he alternates between speaking on behalf of the vendor ('we'), himself ('I'), and the project team ('they'). Raymond's talk displays an explicit orientation towards differences in responsibilities and an attempt to identify relevant spaces of action for the different partners involved. Raymond's turn illustrates how it – through shifts in pronouns and the related responsibilities and obligations – is possible to fluidly produce situationally dependent identifications that have relevance for the in situ next actions.

In overlap, Jack takes the turn (line 9) and addresses Raymond's question about establishing escalation levels, stating that there are pre-established escalation levels on 'the run side'. Due to contextual knowledge acquired through the observation of the team, I know that HBH *is* the run side, as they are the vendor responsible for maintaining the systems. However, without this contextual knowledge, it would be difficult to detect this from the excerpt. Raymond accepts Jack's statement with a hinged 'okay' (1. 11) as Jack continues his talk and explains what the different levels of escalation mean. Then, in overlap with Jack's explanation, Raymond states the level that he thinks CorpConsult are responsible for ('that is us then', line 14). However, Jack continues his turn and names HBH as responsible rather than CorpConsult, thereby making it clear that this is *not* Raymond's 'us' who will be responsible at this point (line 15). Jack's turn prompts Raymond to ask a follow-up question about at what 'point do <u>we</u> get in' (line 16). This is promptly answered by Jack, who states that 'you don't' and explains that this was Simon's point all along (line 17). By saying 'you' rather than 'they', Jack is here ratifying Raymond's categorization as a member of the vendor

[11] Warranty period is a term the projects use to refer to the period in which they are still responsible for the project's final 'product'. This information was acquired through the observations of project teams.

team and acknowledges that Raymond in the situational interaction is trying to clarify matters on their behalf. Raymond responds to this in line 18; his turn is prefaced with an 'oh', which is a change-of-state token, thus suggesting a change of knowledge state (Heritage, 2010). This change is confirmed by the rest of Raymond's turn, produced in overlap with Jack, where he acknowledges that 'we' should not 'get in'. Jack continues his talk and provides a formulation (lines 19–22) in which he summarizes the formal process that they are discussing. He ends the sequence by stating that 'in reality' he does not think the process will be followed but that they will work for it to be ('push for', line 22). He thus indicates that despite formal processes and plans, contingencies might occur and require changes to these, thereby exhibiting an awareness of the environmental uncertainty that Analysis 2 considered.

In the excerpt, we see how Raymond fluidly produces several categorizations as he refers to the vendors as both 'they' and 'we' and thereby construct both the vendor organization and the project as spaces of belonging. The shifts between categories are not random but are instead situated and occasioned, as they are closely coordinated with the project of the ongoing talk. It is only Raymond who produces multiple categorizations, which seems understandable qua his formal role: Raymond is located within one organization but is employed by another and is tasked with enabling smooth collaboration between the two. By being physically located within the internal organization, he is, compared to the vendors in the other excerpts, more tightly involved with this organization and the people working here than the offshored vendor team. Consequently, he shifts between categorizing as a member of the vendor team, the project team, and the internal organization; he creates distance to the vendor (his organization) by referring to them as 'they', thereby speaking as internals might talk about vendors, and then shifts to categorize himself as part of that same vendor organization. As the vendor representative, Raymond is thus very much in an liminal, in-between position (Garsten, 1999); working in the intersection between organizations, and thus the multiplicity of identifications can be seen as a way to manage the ambiguity of his role.

Besides demonstrating the fluidity of identification and the practical implications for the situated work talk, the excerpt illustrates the challenge of sharing knowledge and working across boundaries, by making it evident that the actors possess different types of processual and contextual knowledge, which not only needs to be shared but made understandable to all. In complex collaborative situations such as this, it seems difficult to situationally produce intersubjectivity across organizational boundaries, and the insinuation of contextual uncertainties and contingencies suggests that as the project progresses, and priorities change, and activities unfold, this intersubjectivity needs to be continuously (re)established.

8.2.2.3 *Identifications as fluidly produced: Analytical findings*

The analysis of excerpts 17 and 18 shows that as categorizations are actively constructed and shifted between in situ, identifications are subsequently fluidly produced. The actors explicitly orient towards categories

through the use of pronouns, and they also use these to shift between categories in the local turns, thereby producing multiple categorizations throughout the sequences. The shifts in categories are consequential not only for completing the situated talk and projected actions but also for organizing and subsequently accomplishing the project work. The produced categories are thus not random but rather are situated as relevant in the situation.

Similarly, the analysis shows that boundaries are produced *when* necessary to organize the practical work and responsibilities. The project actors do not seem to problematize the organizational boundaries, rather they navigate between stressing the responsibilities of individuals members while simultaneously producing and upholding the perception of a collective. Work is thus used as a resource to collectively constitute the people working on the project, regardless of organizational ties, as a project team – which then can be differentiated in different units when situationally relevant.

The analysis suggests that different categories 'belonging to' the projects in different ways. For instance, the 'internal' organization is positioned as having influence on the project but not as involved as such in the project work. On the other hand, the vendors are important for and have great influence on *producing* the work but not on deciding the direction of the project. The internal project team members are categorized and categorize themselves as members of the project, and thus there seems to be little uncertainty in regard to their belonging to the project. In contrast, there is seemingly some ambiguity in regard to the 'status' of the vendor team, but this is managed in situ by categorizing these as 'belonging' to the project and only when relevant pointing to organizational differences. In a sense, they 'navigate' between different spaces of belonging, belonging to and being members of more than one space at the same time. Thus, the relational ambiguity of the collaborative setup that the actors discussed in the interviews is seemingly in situated practice handled through fluid productions of relevant identifications.

These findings are significant, as they contribute to previous studies on identification by demonstrating the fluid, constructive nature of identification processes and that this fluidity is important for the actors, since it enables them to achieve the practical work at hand and manage the ambiguity of in-between positions.

In the following section, these findings will be used to explore the relationship between the internal project team and the business side.

8.2.3 Producing 'non-membership'

The above sections have demonstrated the fluid, situated, and constructive nature of identification processes and that the ability to fluidly produce identifications is important for managing relational ambiguity and ensuring collaboration in interorganizational projects. In the following, we will turn from the interorganizational collaboration in projects to the intra-organizational relations. The section will explore the

categorization work produced in an interaction between a project team and the business side of the project with the aim of showing how identifications are produced and negotiated in such contexts.

In the following analytical section, one fragment from one meeting between the business and the project team is examined. I found this particular excerpt to be exemplary, and as it is quite long (necessary to get a full understanding of the interactional sequence), it was decided that the analysis should focus on this one interaction.

The meeting fragment is from a phone meeting between the business side and the project team. Participating in the meeting are: the project manager Jonathan (JO), the project team members Lee (LE), Rasmus (RA), and Janus (JA), as well as the business side representative Lars (LA). Jonathan, Lee, and Rasmus are sitting in a meeting room together and are sharing their screen with Janus and Lars, who are calling in from different locations. The meeting was video recorded in the room. This is not a regular scheduled meeting but rather a 'one-off' type of meeting in which the participants discuss and attempt to align on the plan, responsibilities, and tasks going forward. To be more specific, they are discussing a template that contains an overview of the reports that the system (that they are working on) in the future needs to produce. The participants are not in agreement about the current validity of the information in the template or how to proceed.

The fragment has been divided into two excerpts, and lines that are not analytically relevant have been omitted. The complete transcription of the fragment can be found in Appendix 2.

8.2.3.1 *Excerpt 16: 'we need to get some prose on that'*

In this first excerpt, we see how responsibilities and categorization work are produced as closely related. In this excerpt, it is relevant to notice how the actors design their actions, how they use pronouns, as well as the responsibilities and knowledge they make relevant.

Excerpt 16

1	LE:	men men vi bliver nødt til at have noget prosa på det også altså fra
2		**but but we need to get some prose on that too from the**
3		forretningssiden↘ og: lars jeg bliver nødt til at ↑sige (.) du bliver nødt til
4		**business side↘ and: lars i need to ↑say (.) you need to**
5	LE:	{shrugs lightly, looks at JO}
6	JO:	((laughs softly))
7	LE:	at og (0.7) s- så må du få noget hjælp fra nogle af pigerne eller ˇnogen
8		**and (0.7) th- then you need to get some help from some of the girls or ˇsomeone**
9		andreˇ til og h og gå hen til de her øh s- stakeholders fordi (0.3) .h ↑vi kan

10 **else˘ to and h go to these eh s- stakeholders because (0.3) .h ↑we cannot**
11 jo ikke bare [sende øh templaten til dem]
12 **just [send eh the template to them]**
13 LA: [jamen det har jo ikke noget] med det at gøre lee↓ ø:h >hvad skal
14 **[but that has nothing to do] with that Lee↓ e:h >how should**
15 jeg sige< det det som vi snakkede om sidst det er jo at (0.5) hvis vi har de
16 **i put it< what what we talked about last time that is that (0.5) if we have**
17 LE: {gazes at JO}
18 LA: her rapporter her og det som som jeg også efterlyste lidt i den her template
19 **these reports here and what what i also called for kind of in this template**
20 LE: {frowns and gazes at JO}
21 JO: {gazes at LE}
22 LA: det var at øh jamen der er de her rapporter (0.6) øh (0.4) hvad er det for
23 **was that eh but there are these reports here↑ (0.6) ehm (0.4) h what kind of**
24 noget data (.) der er i
25 **data (.) is in here**
26

(26 lines omitted)

52 LA: >så kan man sige< vi kan jo allerede lave en en en preliminary (.) gab
53 **>then you can say< we can already do a preliminary (.) gab**
54 analysis på det↘
55 **analysis on that↘**
56 JO: mm
57 **mm**

This first excerpt makes it evident that the actors are not in agreement and that they, through categorization work and disaffiliation, produce different identifications.

The excerpt begins with Lee emphasizing that they need some 'prose' from the business side (lines 1–4), specifically pointing to Lars as relevant in this regard by mentioning his name. By repeating 'need to' three times (lines 1–4), Lee strongly emphasizes the importance of his utterance and frames it as problematic if Lars does not deliver, thereby making it difficult for Lars to reject the request. The turn thus seems more like a demand than a request. Lee's 'demand' suggests that he orients towards having entitlement to make this demand either qua his own entitlement or on behalf of the team; which one is difficult to say, as he initiates the 'demand' as coming from the 'we' ('we need to get', line 2) but then personalizes it by adding 'I need to say'. Also, the demand design could signal that he considers this as a strategic necessity in *this* situational and relational context in order to influence the negotiation process and achieve what is necessary for the team. Later, as we continue, we see that Lars does not align with Lee's demand as reasonable.

Through the repeated reference to what 'we need' and what 'you need' (referring to Lars) (lines 2 and 4), Lee produces two distinct categories: He categorizes himself as part of the collective 'we' (in the situational

context understood as the project team) and subsequently categorizes Lars ('you') as outside of the collective 'we', and thus not as a member of the project team but rather as peripheral. Lee refers to both the 'business side' and 'you', thus implicitly categorizing Lars as a member of the business side.

Then, Lee makes a suggestion about who Lars can get help from ('the girls', line 8. Jonathan treats this suggestion as a laughable (line 6) (Holt, 2016; Tranekjær, 2017), which can be seen as way to display affiliation (Lindström & Sorjonen, 2013). Lee uses a smiling voice as he continues his turn, thereby affiliating with Jonathan's laughter and now seemingly orienting to his own utterance as 'non-serious' (Holt, 2016, p. 90) and playful. He expands his suggestion ('or ˇsomeone elseˇ') and specifies what they can help with (talk with stakeholders). Lee then initiates an account of why this is necessary, but his turn is interrupted by Lars, who takes the turn in overlap (lines 13–14).

Lars rejects Lee's suggestion; by using a change-of-state-token ('but'), strong wording ('nothing to do with'), and direct selection of recipient ('lee') Lars objects to Lee's statement, annulling its relevance. This strong rejection could be a response to the perhaps implicit suggestion that Lars cannot manage the task on his own but needs help from 'the girls', which despite being treated as playful by the others could be interpreted as an insulting remark.

Lars redirects the talk by referring to what they talked about at the last meeting, stating that he has already previously 'called for' clarification about the reports (lines 15–19). By referring to the past meeting and his past 'calls', he positions this claim as 'old', rather than something new he just brought into the conversation, and consequently as something they should have attended to already (lines 15–25). Simultaneously with Lars' turn, Lee frowns (line 20), which makes it clear to those in the room, although not to Lars who cannot see him, that he is not agreeing with what Lars is saying. This can be considered embodied disaffiliation (Lindström & Sorjonen, 2013).

In lines 53-55, Lars concludes his turn and makes the suggestion that 'we' could already do a 'gap analysis' using the data already available. He thus makes his position clear: that they should not start by going out to stakeholders as Lee requests but should instead do an analysis of what they currently have. At the same time, by saying 'we', Lars positions this gap analysis as a *joint* task and not as something he has sole responsibility for – he makes it a collective 'problem' rather than an individual one. To this, Jonathan provides minimal response and thereby acknowledges the remark without revealing his stance towards the discussion.

It seems that Lars has entitlement to give his opinion about the direction of the project and activities planned but does not have entitlement to make decisions himself; rather, he must engage in dialogue with the project team. The project team is likewise obligated to engage in these discussions with Lars, as the business representative, and is obligated to actually perform the project work. This obligation as well as their professional and contextual knowledge provides the team with entitlement to influence how the work is to be carried out, which again necessitates this type of discussion with the business side.

The actors' different positions on the processual steps are most likely connected to different interests and goals due to different professional areas and places in the organization. Jonathan and Lee categorize themselves as 'competent members of the project' who are able to talk on behalf of what is required and what is 'best' for the work going on in the project team, whereas Lars seemingly talks from a 'business-internal position'. We can see that Lars works to not involve the stakeholders at this point in time, which *could* be due to internal processes, office politics, or his own personal preferences. It is thus clear that the actors' identifications as members of different organizations (the project and the business) influence the interaction in situ and their approach to the work at hand, as they have different priorities and requirements, making it difficult to come to an agreement.

As we continue to the next excerpt, we will further examine how the actors in situ construct and orient to their collaboration.

8.2.3.2 *Excerpt 17: 'and that is where we need your help'*

In Excerpt 17, the discussion continues (after some omitted lines). In this excerpt, it is important to notice Jonathan's framing of the task, which Lee in the previous excerpt (unsuccessfully) attempted to convince Lars to take responsibility for.

Excerpt 17

77	LE:	[.h men men lars] vi bliver jo nødt til at have involveret de her key
78		**[.h but but lars] we need to involve these key**
79		stakeholders til og og: få dem til o:g sige god for vores rapporter↘
80		**stakeholders to and and: get them to vouch for our reports↘**
81	RA:	{looks and points at LE and then turns to look at JO}
82	RA:	[( )]
83		**[( )]**
84	JO:	[det det første det første]
85		**[the the first the first]**
86	JO:	{gestures with hand}
87	RA:	{covers mouth with hands}
88	JO:	det skal få vi skal få signet af
89		**what needs to we need to get signed off on**
90	JO:	{taps lightly on the table}
91	JO:	er hey (.)
92		**is hey (.)**
93	JO:	{taps the table with a flat hand}
94	JO:	vi har snakket med jer i november måned (.)
95		**we have talked with you in the month of november (.)**

JO: {taps the table with a flat hand}
JO: omkring nogle rapporter som [vi bruger] i dag↘ er det de her rapporter
about some reports that [we use] today↘ is it these reports
? : [jah]
[yeah]
JO: {taps the table with a flat hand}
JO: her rapporter som vi har fået ˇaf jerˇ h h er det de her rapporter som
here reports which we have gotten ˇfrom youˇ h h it is these reports which
JO: {taps the table with a flat hand}
JO: i stadigvæk bruger↗ i fremtiden
you still use↗ in the future
JO: {taps on the table with flat hand}
JO: og så skal de svare på de der fire fem spørgsmål som ligger i vores
and then they need to answer these four five questions which lies in our
template↘ det det er step ↑et (.)
template↘ that that is step ↑one (.)

(20 lines omitted)

JO: nu nu skal vi først lave step one færdig ↑ikke (.) det er der [hvor vi har
now now we first need to complete step one ↑right (.) and that is [where we
LA: [(det lyder
[(sounds
JO: brug] for din hjælp lars til at til lige gå ud til de
need] your help lars to to just go out to
LA: godt)]
good)]
JO: der stakeholders som er som vi har identified nu og gå tilbage (.)med de
the stakeholders which are which we have identified now and go back (.) with
der reports og sige okay det er dem vi har fået af dig kan du lige
these reports and say okay it is these we have received from you can you just
fill ud fylde den her template med de der fire spørgsmål og så er det en
fill in fill in this template with these four questions and then that is a
done deal↘
done deal↘
(1.8)
LA: ah det skal jeg gerne gøre øh (.)
ah i will be happy to do that ehm (.)

Here, categorizations are produced as negotiation resources in the discussion about who needs to take on specific responsibilities, and we see that entitlements and obligations are connected to specific categories, which further seem connected to institutional roles and organizational boundaries.

The excerpt begins as Lee almost reiterates the design of his turn from line 1 by again using ‘but but’ and ‘we need’ (line 77). The change-of-state-token ‘but’ signals that he is not in agreement with Lars’ proposed plan of action. Instead, he again emphasizes what ‘we need’ in order to move forward with the work, again making his stance clear. Lee thus reiterates the same ‘need’ as he put forward in lines 1–12 but which Lars at this point has not aligned with.

Lee selects Lars as the direct recipient of this talk by mentioning his name, again making it evident that he is central to solving this task. However, Lee here softens the demand through a shift in pronouns; he designs it as ‘we need to involve these stakeholders’ (line 77) rather than ‘you need’ to. Thus, he positions the task as something that is important for the project and not something Lars has failed/needs to do. Rather than intensifying the split between sides, he downgrades it by underlining the collective and not the individual.

Jonathan then takes the turn (line 83/84), prefacing it with ‘the first’, thereby indicating that he will make a list. He then presents a scenario of how to perform the discussed task/‘need’ (lines 87–110). In the scenario, he deploys hypothetical active voicing (Simmons & LeCouteur, 2011), with which he shows how utterances in the hypothetical situation could be phrased. In line 198, he shifts to explain what the stakeholders will need to do (answer questions). He ends this ‘the first’ part of this talk by concluding ‘that is step one’ (line 110) and hereafter, in the omitted lines, he moves on to explain step two.

Through the scenario, Jonathan frames the task as easy rather than challenging, although required. The outlining of the task is presented as a conclusion about how things should be done. This suggests an orientation towards his position as the project manager and the subsequent epistemic authority and entitlement to make decisions on behalf of the project. In the following turns, we see how others align with this and ratify his categorization.

In line 130/131, after the omitted lines, Jonathan then directs the request at Lars: By designing the turn ‘we need you help’ (lines 131 and 135), he offers Lars a positive position as the ‘helper’. Essentially, Jonathan requests Lars to take on the exact same task, as Lee did, but instead of framing Lars as the ‘bad guy’ Jonathan in his turn offers Lars a more attractive role as the helper. Again, the collective ‘we’ is exclusive of Lars as the collective (‘we’) needs his (‘your’) help, but in this instance it is used as a positive, since Lars’ position as external to the project team is framed as advantageous because he has better access to certain people. This access is constructed in Jonathan’s turn as important and valuable. Thus, where Lee’s positioning of Lars seemed antagonistic and exclusive, Jonathan produces Lars’ position, which they all treat external to the project team, as a positive.

Lars responds to this with ‘sounds good’ (lines 133 and 137), thus seemingly accepting task, which he did not do when Lee requested the same task to be completed. The uptake here is likely due to the design of request, but Lars may also find it more difficult to reject requests made by Jonathan, as he is the project manager and thus has more authority than Lee.

Continuing his turn, Jonathan summarizes the tasks (lines 134–145). By using 'just' twice, he downgrades the difficulty of the task, and by concluding his turn with 'then that is a done deal' he seems to indicate that the task can be completed easily and quickly. The excerpt ends as Lars accepts the task (line 147/48) by saying that he will be 'happy' (in Danish, 'gerne') to do it. Jonathan and Lee have thus seemingly succeeded with the project of their talk, although it required some interactional effort to achieve.

In this excerpt, we see how Jonathan (and Lee) very clearly produce membership of the category 'project team', sharing engagement in the work that is required for the project to be carried out and identifying as part of 'we'. The team members share interests and interactionally collaborate to get Lars to accept the task. In contrast, Lars implicitly categorizes himself as a member of 'the business', since he accepts that he is the one with access to the business stakeholders and he does not object to being categorized as external to the project team 'we'.

8.2.3.3 *Producing 'non-membership': Analytical observations*

The analysis of the fragment from a meeting between the project team and the business side shows a very different interactional dynamic. Rather than identifying as collective and producing the project as a shared space of belonging, these project partners treat their organizational ties and subsequently the organizational boundaries as important, and this greatly influences the different identifications produced.

The actors navigate, some more competently than others, in a complex intra-organizational project setting where different authorities, interest, obligations, entitlements, and different kinds of belongings to the project are at play and are made relevant in the meeting situation. In this meeting, the collaboration is not smooth or unproblematic. Rather, as the actors situationally produce membership of different categories, they also negotiate the responsibilities as well as influence within and on the setting. The analysis makes it clear that there is a clash between expectations, and the direct and somewhat antagonistic design of turns (of some actors) highlights differences between the actors. One might assume that these actors, coming from the same organization, would categorize each other as part of the same collective. However, it is evident that boundaries are situationally being produced and that the members produce categorizations of each other as belonging to different categories, while *also* somewhat both belonging to the project (in different ways), and that these categorizations matter in terms of negotiating the work process.

Looking at this example where there is clearly disagreement and disaffiliation, it seems reasonable that the actors experience the relationship between the business and IT as somewhat strained (as reported in the interviews). The actors need to continuously align, which can be difficult in a setting with divergent requirements and needs. The greater the uncertainty, the greater the need is to align to avoid future problems, (e.g. unexpected events such as those examined in Analysis 2). As Pich et al. note: 'a lot of time and effort must go into managing relationships with stakeholders and getting them to accept unplanned changes' (Pich

et al., 2002, p. 1019). Combining this with the uncertainty that the stakeholders themselves can introduce and the ambiguity of the relations between the actors makes this a difficult setting to navigate.

The actors in this meeting do not share professional competences or organizational obligations, although they are all, qua their participation in the meeting, positioned as relevant for the project. Situationally, they construct category memberships and institutional belongings, and thereby produce situated identifications that are made relevant for accomplishing the work talk in situ. Here, it does not seem as if the actors construct the project as a *shared* space of belonging; instead, the project is constructed as the project team members' space of belonging whereas the business' is categorized as peripherally belonging.

8.3 Analytical Findings

This analysis contributes with findings that enable us to better understand the situated practices of managing ambiguous relations in intra- and interorganizational projects. The findings from the above analytical sections will now be considered in order to explain *how* project actors make sense of ambiguous relations in complex projects and *how* the project actors situationally produce identifications as project members and/or as members of organizations. The above analysis that the production of identifications have implication for the work in situated practice.

8.3.1 Producing membership

The analysis of the different meeting fragments demonstrates that formal organizational ties do not determine how actors in intra- and interorganizational projects produce identification as members of the project. Rather, the analysis suggests that the actors actively produce different degrees of inclusion/membership and exclusion/non-membership.

Let us first consider inclusion. The analysis suggests that identifications are situationally produced through relevant categorization work and situated orientations to epistemic domains. Throughout the excerpts, the different vendors *and* internal teams continuously demonstrate their membership knowledge and their integration in the project through 'work talk' while also actually producing the *talk as work* (Boden, 1994). This practice requires specific skills, professional background, as well as daily work on the project. The project team members and the vendors demonstrate professional and membership competences and are thus in situ doing being (competent) project members (Goodwin, 1994; Sacks, 1984). The displays of competence and subsequent categorizations as project members are ratified by the others in the interactions. In a way, they can be seen as enacting a *community of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991) through their 'doing being IT professionals'.

The quotes from the interviews suggest an a priori problematization of the collaboration and/or relationship with the vendors; however, in practice, these problems are rarely observable. Instead, the analysis of the situated meeting interactions suggests that the actors continuously orient towards collaborating and in doing so produce and maintain a collective identification as members of the project. Thus, vendors and the internal teams make an effort to produce a mutual understanding of themselves as 'working on a joint project', accomplished situationally through the sharing of work-relevant knowledge and microcontexts (Olson & Olson, 2000).

Furthermore, by talking about the project as work in general, as well as talking about the individual work activities, the individuals' work performances are positioned as important for the project and the collective, constituting the interdependence within the team. As noted by Larsson and Lundholm (2013), 'it is through the establishment of this collective identity that individual interactional identities are endowed with new obligations, rendering them interdependent' (Larsson & Lundholm, 2013, p. 1124). Here, the actors produce and uphold the perception of collectives working together (i.e. being a team) and at the same time stress the responsibilities of some specific members or parts of the collective 'we'.

Although it is clear that the vendors and the project team members identify as members of the project team, the analysis also makes it clear that the position of the vendors is more liminal and their organizational ties are treated as external in relation to the organization in which the project is formally situated. We will return to this in one of the next sections.

The analysis finds that despite shared organizational context, the business side representative and the project team members do not constitute themselves to be members of a joint collective but rather as two partners that (are trying to) work together to accomplish a goal, in that the internal organization representative is not categorized nor categorize himself as a member of the project in the same way that project internals and vendors seem to. In general, the analysis shows that when actors refer to the internal organization (i.e. the business side), this organization is positioned as important in the sense that alignment is needed, however it is also categorized as 'not involved' in the project work. The organizational internals are thus categorized as and are also categorizing themselves as 'outsiders to the project *work*' but at the same time as a type of 'peripheral insider', as they are relevant and needed for the project to succeed. This is in contrast to the categorizations of the organizationally external vendors as central insiders in the project, qua their involvement in the work. These findings make it clear that organizational ties do not determine identification. Instead, it seems that how the actors categorize their own and others' 'belonging' to the project is influenced by discrepancies caused by differences in professional areas, goals, and focus, as well as differences in entitlement, obligations, and responsibilities.

Contrary to the meetings between the internals and the vendors, the meeting between the project team and the business is a 'one-off' type of meeting; they do not have daily meetings in which they discuss the project because there is no need for this, since their *daily* work is not interdependent. However, they do, as is evident

from the meeting, need to align on goals and processes. The type of dispute that occurs in the analysed fragment did not occur in any of the project teams' meetings with the vendors, where there instead was compliance with the internals' requests and focus on delivering the requested work. Of course questions, critique, problems etc. were raised in these meetings, but there did not seem to be discrepancies in terms of processes or interests. In the analysed excerpts from meetings between vendors and project teams, the only type of alignment needed was about how and when to do the work, whereas in the meeting with the business there was an apparent need to discuss and possibly align on overall process rather than how to do the specific tasks.

The actors here do not orient towards the project as being a joint project with common interests but rather as an arena where they need to negotiate influence on processes. This makes it relevant to consider whether the focus on negotiation rather than effort to collaborate could be due to a lack of collective identification; perhaps the observable frustration here and in the interviews is in fact due to the unresolved ambiguity of their relationship. It is evident from the interviews and the micro-analysis that there is uncertainty in the IT organization about the relationship with the business; is the business a collaboration partner or customer? Perhaps it is this uncertainty that is observable in the meeting between the project team and the business representative. The matters problematized in the interviews can be treated as a sense of lack of shared identification, which also seems to the at play here. However, although there is a desire (in the interviews) for closer, or at least better, collaboration with the business, in practice the actors do not seem to work to produce any sort of shared belonging or constitute the project as a shared space of belonging. Rather, through their interaction, they (re)produce the relationship as 'not close'.

I cannot conclude whether the lack of situated collective identifications and need for negotiation are due to power struggles, uncertainty, or something else; however, it does seem that the factors that enable and influence the construction of collective identifications (empirically observable as membership categorizations) in the project team-vendor relationships are missing from the business relationship, suggesting that these factors are important for producing collective identifications.

8.3.2 Constructing boundaries

Now, we will consider how boundaries matter in these complex project settings. The analysis demonstrates that boundaries are not necessarily something to 'work across' but rather can be produced in situ as resources in identification processes and are made relevant for the accomplishment of the work in intra- and interorganizational projects.

Firstly, the analysis shows that members do not treat boundaries as stable structures but instead situationally shape project boundaries and construct organizational boundaries when relevant. This implies that we, as previous studies have stressed (Ratcheva, 2009), need to conceptualize (organizational)

boundaries as fluid rather than thinking of, for example, organizational boundaries as strict lines between organizations. This also aligns with the projects-as-practice perspective on boundaries, which see boundaries as (re)constructed through the project actors' talk, actions, and collective work practices (Karrbom Gustavsson & Gohary, 2012). Conceptualizing boundaries as situated and fluidly produced does not imply that organizational boundaries do not exist, since there are evidently clear demarcations of organizations, rather it directs our attention to *how the members* construct these boundaries in situ as part of their daily practice. In that sense, organizational boundaries are, for the members, situated phenomena.

Secondly, the analysis shows that boundaries matter for the construction of identifications in these intra- and interorganizational project settings. The project is not treated as a stable entity; rather, the actors in the setting construct shared memberships of the project in situ while also orienting to memberships of other categories. The project boundaries are thus situated and 'dependent on collaborative (inter)action, making the temporary re-shaping of borders a joint effort' (Karrbom Gustavsson & Gohary, 2012, p. 372).

The analysis suggests that the produced identifications have practical implications for the accomplishment of the work talk in situ and seemingly also for how the actors understand their relationship retrospectively. In particular, other identifications than the collective (i.e. the project membership) are made to be relevant for the organization of tasks and responsibilities in situ. These other identifications can simultaneously be separate from and at the same time part of the project and are repeatedly framed as 'sides' of the projects (development side, business side), which indexes categorical membership of particular organizations. These 'sides' and organizational boundaries are only made relevant as per the project of the speaker; that is, they are only emphasized as *needed* for at the task at hand, showing that formal organizational entitlements and obligations matter for accomplishing (or negotiating) the work at hand. Organizational boundaries and the subsequent entitlements etc. are in that sense constructed as situated resources for the accomplishment of the practical project work.

Thus, the analysis shows that boundaries are actively made relevant in the work talk and used to progress with the projects; however, the analysis also finds that boundaries *can* be produced in such a way so as to hinder collaboration, not in themselves but qua the obligations, entitlements, etc. that people connect to these boundaries. Of course, the organizational boundaries matter for the collaboration in the sense that the actors have different organizational contexts, knowledge, etc., and previous research also suggests that knowledge sharing in virtual, interorganizational teams is challenged (Cramton, 2001). However, in practice these are not treated as particularly problematic or as hindrances for collaboration. Rather, the actors simply produce work-arounds such as daily/weekly meetings, which are constructed as sites for knowledge sharing.

The vendors are particularly interesting in terms of boundaries and identifications. All project actors are in somewhat liminal and temporary positions; however, the vendors' positions are particularly liminal and transitory as these actors work in the intersection between organizational contexts, and their work on the project can always be cancelled by the customer or they can be moved to another project. As a consequence,

the vendors navigate a space with many unknowns, uncertainties, and a lack of influence while they are at the same time required to deliver specified work and develop expert knowledge.

Previous studies find that projects are inherently uncertain due to different kinds of environmental and internal complexities (which the previous analyses also found). Similarly, liminal and transitory positions are considered challenging due to high levels of relational ambiguity and role uncertainty (Borg & Söderlund, 2015a). Previous literature has emphasized liminal/transitory positions as challenging and stressed that liminal workers need to develop particular competences to navigate between shifts in belonging (Borg & Söderlund, 2013; Garsten, 1999; Shortt, 2015). In particular, the vendor manager Raymond is in a liminal position and observably produces and navigates between different spaces of belonging. As the vendor manager, located with the internal team members, Raymond is seemingly 'more' liminal than the vendors in the other examples, as they are located in their respective organizations. The analysis shows that he categorizes himself as belonging to both the project and the vendor organization while being located with the customer organization. Thus, he works in an in-between position and it is clear that he makes an effort to ensure that there is a clear alignment of responsibilities and roles. Very much like the IOR managers in Ellis and Ybema (2010), Raymond's job is to manage the relationship between the vendor and the customer. Where Ellis and Ybema showed that *boundary work* was an important resource to manage identifications in in-between positions, this analysis expands on their work by showing how liminal persons can use boundaries as resources to produce identifications in practice. Thereby, actors in liminal positions are able to manage the ambiguity of their positions through situationally relevant shifts in identifications.

These findings suggest that we need to question the assumptions about identification made in some previous studies. For instance, Fiol and O'Connor (2005) suggest that one way to reduce the uncertainty in and around projects is if members *identify with* a team and understand what the purpose of the team is etc. However, considering the findings that identifications are fluidly produced in practice, we might question if it is really a 'stable team identification' that reduces uncertainty or if it is actually the opportunity to continuously produce identifications as members of different units at once that smoothly enables the actors to accomplish the project work. It seems sensible that liminal persons such as those in intra- and especially interorganizational projects *need* be able to construct different types of identifications in order to manage the uncertainties and ambiguity of their work situation. Within this particular setting, where most actors are liminal in some sense, it seems reasonable that they manage and perhaps reduce ambiguity through (fluid) constructions of identifications; in that, identification constructions becomes a resource or mechanism to manage ambiguity.

The analytical findings contributes to the projects-as-practice literature by showing that actors reshape project boundaries in situ and through talk (re)construct organizational boundaries, enabling the production of (multiple) identifications that are situationally relevant for the work processes. We will discuss this further in Chapter 9.

8.3.3 Spaces of belonging

Finally, I want to consider the analytical findings using the concept of *spaces of belonging*, which I have mentioned several times throughout the analysis and briefly introduced in section 3.2.1.

The projects in this study are intra- and interorganizational and require virtual collaboration, and, consequently, the different project actors do not share physical place, which has previously been connected to establishing a sense of belonging (Fortier, 1999). Instead, as the analysis demonstrates, the actors may produce the project as a shared space of belonging, a space that is not bound to any location or organization.

The virtual meetings function as *opportunities* for creating the project as 'something we are mutually working on' and which 'we identify as members of': by being invited to the meeting *and* actively participating, the participants can produce identifications as members of the project and at the same time repeatedly constituting the project *as a project* to be worked on. Outside of the meeting, the actors are *doing the work*, which then situationally is talked about and thereby used as resources to categorize themselves as project members. Project meetings can be seen as category-bound activities, and participation should be seen as a predicate for project membership. However, as the observations made clear, there are many different kinds of project meetings unfolding in practice (section 5.3.3.2), and according to the orientations of the members, participation in a project meeting does not in itself constitute membership of the project, although it does seemingly create the category 'project-relevant person'.

Through the meetings, the projects as spaces of belonging become almost 'tangible', in that the virtual meeting platforms and the virtual tools visualize or represent the (interdependent) work unfolding in the projects. In that sense, the lack of actual place forces the actors to produce a shared space in which they can reduce the ambiguity of the collaborative setup. Thus, although the interorganizational, virtual project collaborations lack the stability and recognizability of a shared place (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003) as somewhere they all 'belong'; they can work around this and instead construct the project as a non-physical space to work 'within' and perhaps belong to.

In previous literature, it has been suggested that virtual teams, in order to overcome the lack of shared physical place, need to create a *perception of proximity* (Henderson et al., 2016). In practice, this virtual way of collaborating is treated as unproblematic by the actors and especially the project team members and the vendors seem to overcome the lack of 'proximity'. Czarniawska and Mazza (2003, p. 286) note that 'the activity of turning organizations into liminal spaces becomes a routine', and in a similar vein the actors here treat the realities of their work situations as mundane. Through their regular sharing of microcontexts (necessary due to task interdependence) the team members and vendors produce a sense of understanding of what is occurring 'in the other place', which can be seen as producing proximity – not in terms of place, but in terms of work. Thus, it also through and due to the interdependence of work that the actors can construct

the project as a shared space of belonging; in that sense, knowledge about and involvement in work become category predicates, constructing membership of the 'project'.

In contrast to this, the business side and project team members are relatively proximate in terms of location, organizational context, shared cultural backgrounds – and thus have a shared (physical) place – however, this does not seem to positively influence collaboration or the production of collective identifications in the same way that 'work proximity' seems to. The business side is not deeply involved in the ongoing work tasks, and they are not 'close' in terms of integration in each other's daily work. The business and the project team members have the option to produce actual physical proximity when they have meetings, as they are located a few kilometres apart, but in this case they decide to meet virtually instead (which is not uncommon). Thus, the business and the project team are essentially collaborating yet remaining apart, and, thus, through their talk in the meeting and through their choice of meeting type, they are producing a kind of compartmentalized belonging. Thus, rather than producing the project as a shared space of belonging, these actors produce compartmentalized spaces of belonging that are interrelated but also separate.

The challenges regarding the business–IT relationship, as expressed in the interviews and observed in the micro-analysis, can also be addressed as relating to communities of practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991). That is, the actors have different practices for doing work as well as different competences and knowledge, and boundaries between these communities of practice are being produced in situ through the discussion of process (excerpts 16 and 17). In contrast, the vendors and internal project team members share a community of practice – and through their talk produce their work and professional competences as belonging to the same community of practice. Thus, it is not shared organizational 'belonging' or physical proximity that in itself produces identification; rather, it is through the *work* and shared practices that identifications are produced.

8.3.4 Final remarks

In sum, the analysis demonstrates how project actors manage the ambiguity of the collaborative relations in complex, intra- and interorganizational project settings by producing and shifting between situationally relevant identifications.

The analysis demonstrates, by attending to the categorization work on the micro level, that project actors fluidly produce identifications and that organizational ties are not necessarily indicative for how project actors identify in practice. In fact, it seems that involvement in the ongoing project work and regular interactions produce a sense of proximity and emphasize the interdependence between actors, which contributes to the constitution of the project as a shared space of belonging. Or in contrast, when there is less collaboration and more negation, the collective identifications as members of the project are not produced.

Finally, here, at the end of this analysis, it becomes apparent to me that I, in my own role, can relate to some of the project actors' challenges and experiences of ambiguity.

Due to the nature of an industrial PhD study, my position is somewhat liminal in that I work in-between two very different types of organizations. As I also touched upon in section 5.3.2.5, it required effort to learn the relevant practices, competences, and knowledge for each of these and at the same time find a way to engage the two 'worlds'. On a personal level, the position has been very ambiguous in terms of identification and creating spaces of belonging – and these identifications have situationally and periodically altered depending of the current focus and work at hand. I do find that some of the ambiguity of my role has been reduced over time as I have developed from a newcomer to a more experienced member of both communities. However, due to the liminality of the position, there remains the challenge of managing different interests and ways of working as well as an ambiguity in terms of belonging.

Another aspect that becomes relevant as this study moves towards the final phase is that my position, similar to those of project actors, is temporary. That is, as the project ends, I will move on to a new position/organization. Of course, this produces some uncertainty in terms of what the future will bring, but this has all along been an expected uncertainty, in much the same way as project members know that the project is a temporary work setting. Writing this analysis thus made me reflect on my own role, making it evident to me that I have developed competences in regard to and experience with working in an ambiguous work setting.

9 Discussion and Conclusions

This study has explored how project actors manage different types of uncertainty and ambiguity in complex, global project settings. The study contributes in particular to literature on projects-as-practice with novel insight into the situational practices in project teams, and it further allows us to reconsider a number of previous theoretical assumptions. The following chapter takes a closer look at and discusses these theoretical contributions and presents conclusions for the central research question of this study.

This chapter is organized as follows: First, the main findings of the three analytical chapters will be summarized and then related to present conclusions regarding the central research question. Then, we turn to discussing how these findings contribute to the projects-as-practice literature. Hereafter, we will discuss the findings' implications for the concepts of routines and identification, considering how the findings of situated practices help us develop these concepts. Next, methodological reflections will be presented, considering the strengths and limitations of the methods and analytical process of this study. Then, we will move on to discuss the study's implications for practice (i.e. the implications for project managers, MLIT, and project-based organizations in general). The final section will consider the study's implications for future research.

9.1 Central Findings

First, I will briefly summarize the central findings of each of the three analytical chapters, pointing to the main contributions. These findings will be discussed in the subsequent section in relation to previous project studies.

9.1.1 Analysis 1. Creating order and ordinariness

The first analytical chapter explores the questions: In complex projects, how do project actors produce order, and how do project actors situationally produce their setting and work as ordinary? The chapter demonstrates how the project actors, through situated practices in which they use membership knowledge, categorization work, and material resources, produce the project setting and their work as orderly (manageable) and ordinary (nothing special). Furthermore, the analysis points to this production of order as a necessity in managing the complex work setting and as a way to manage the experienced uncertainty. The analysis concludes that membership competences and knowledge are central in this process, as they enable the actors

to produce the complex as mundane. In sum, the findings illustrate how actors are situationally able to make project work manageable and constitute order in the setting through situated demonstrations of membership knowledge and competence, and how what is observed as 'ordinary days at work' is produced as such (i.e. as ordinary) despite experiences of uncertainty.

9.1.2 Analysis 2: Managing the Unexpected

The second analytical chapter explores the questions: In complex projects, how do project actors handle instances of unexpectedness, and how do project actors situationally achieve sensemaking and organization of action in unexpected situations? The chapter demonstrates how project actors, through situationally relevant resources, are able to make sense of and manage unexpected events, thereby illustrating their situated practices of managing unexpectedness. The empirical findings show that local contingencies of the situations matter greatly for the situated management practices, and the analysis identifies that the members orient towards two types of unexpectedness: 1) the expected unexpectedness and 2) the unexpected unexpectedness. The analysis finds that in regard to the first type, actors talk about and thereby produce the issues as manageable, and that this is possible because the issues emerge from within their own work, that is, their space of action. Furthermore, it becomes clear that the routine meeting function as a mechanism to handle unexpected issues and that the actors have routinized the management of this type of unexpectedness. In contrast, the actors make sense of the second type of unexpected event as an issue that is outside of their action space and as non-resolvable for them personally, necessitating the team to focus on understanding the problem rather than responding to it. In this situation, the routine meeting functions as a resource by providing a space for achieving collective sensemaking. In sum, the findings show the situated practices of making sense of and managing different types of unexpectedness and contribute with novel findings of routines as management resources in unexpected situations.

9.1.3 Analysis 3: Producing belonging

The third analytical chapter explores the questions: In complex projects, how do project actors make sense of relations, and how do project actors situationally produce identifications as members of the projects or the organizations? The chapter illustrates that intra- and interorganizational projects are relationally ambiguous work settings and demonstrates how actors, by drawing on membership knowledge and knowledge of project work, interactionally construct identifications that function as resources to situationally handle the ambiguity of these contexts. The analysis shows the situatedness and fluidity of identifications in these projects and that identifications in projects are not tied to organizational boundaries but rather that actors manage the

ambiguity of their relations and uncertainty of their liminal positions by fluidly producing identifications as relevant in situ and by (possibly) constructing the project as a shared space of belonging. In sum, these analytical findings contribute to the understanding of how actors in practice manage relational ambiguity of complex, cross-organizational work settings and provide new understandings of situated identification processes.

9.2 Answering the Research Question

This study has sought to answer the central research question: In global and complex projects, how do project actors manage uncertainty and ambiguity? In considering the findings from the three analytical chapters, my study concludes that actors in global and complex project contexts manage different kinds of uncertainty and ambiguity by drawing on membership knowledge and competences to produce routines and situated identifications. Situationally, routines and identifications become mechanisms to manage uncertain or ambiguity. The membership knowledge and competences as well as these management mechanisms make a difference for how actors situationally actually make sense of, organize, and accomplish their work in a setting that is treated as complex.

My study finds that membership competences and knowledge are central for the actors' ability to produce routines and identifications in ways that simultaneously attend to the local contingencies of the interaction and work setting/situation as such. This study shows how the actors' accomplish situated identifications and situationally relevant routines and how that indexes membership competences and knowledge, and how membership knowledge and competences thus matter for the situational sensemaking and management of uncertain and ambiguous aspects within the work context. Figure 6, below, attempts to illustrate the interrelation between complex challenges, membership knowledge and competences, and situated management mechanisms (in this empirical setting: routines and identifications).

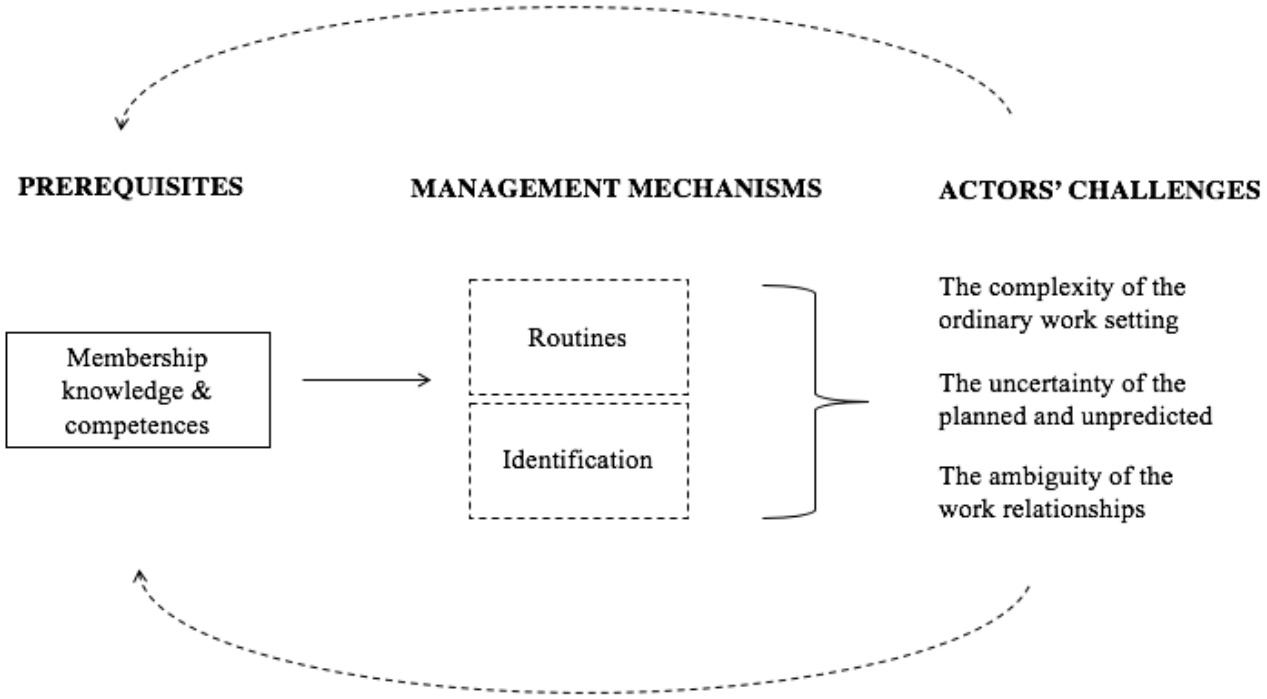


Figure 6. The process of managing uncertainty and ambiguity

Figure 6 illustrates the interconnection between the actors' *challenges*, such as those in focus in the analytical chapters of this study, the situated *management mechanisms* used to handle uncertainty and ambiguity, and, finally, the *prerequisites* necessary to produce the management mechanisms in situ (i.e. the situationally relevant membership knowledge and competences). Also, the figure points to how this is a circular process; experience with challenges may develop the actor's membership knowledge and competences and consequently their ability to produce situated solutions that are relevant in the local circumstances. The challenges and management hereof are of course locally contingent, but membership knowledge and competences seem to be relevant across situations. Finally, the lines around the management mechanisms are stippled to indicate that these mechanisms may be different mechanisms in other situated and/or professional contexts

Membership knowledge and competences are used and constructed as such in situated practice and as used in the interactional process of making uncertain and ambiguous aspects of the work setting manageable and to accomplish the overall practice of managing the project. In other words, membership knowledge and competences make a difference for the actors' abilities to fluidly produce identifications, which has a direct impact on their collaboration with others in cross-organizational projects. Further, membership knowledge and competence enable project actors to 'predict' the unexpected (i.e. being aware of what issues might emerge and being familiar with how to manage these). In this way, the actors' ability to manage uncertainty and ambiguity situationally seems connected to their knowledgeability *as* members and their experience with

navigating in and making sense of the complex context. This further seems to have implications for the actors' demonstrations of competences and thus professionalism and even for their general practices managing complex projects.

In sum, this study demonstrates how actors, by drawing on membership knowledge and competences, construct situated identifications and produce routines and how they become able to manage different types of uncertainties and ambiguities within complex projects through these resources.

9.3 Implications for Project Research

This study contributes to literature within the projects-as-practice field by demonstrating situated practices of managing projects *in* practice. The following section will in detail point to specific studies and streams of practice research that this study contributes to.

9.3.1 Situated practices

In line with Geraldi et al. (2011), who review project literature on complexity and point to five dimensions of complexity, this study finds that project actors continuously 'deal with the complexities of projects in practice' (Geraldi et al., 2011, p. 967) and that it would be valuable to 'better represent the "realities" of projects' (Geraldi et al., 2011, p. 986) in regard to understanding how complex matters are made manageable. In this way, my study, as well as Geraldi et al. (2011), oppose previous studies such as Pich et al. (2002), who find that complexity can be handled through standardizing models for project management and who treat risks as challenging a pre-existing order (Pich et al., 2002). What studies such as Pich et al. (2002) miss and what my study shows is the efforts of actors to continuously produce order in project contexts, even in the seemingly most mundane situations. Although previous research is attentive to the influence of local contingencies on project management practices (Söderholm, 2008; Söderlund, 2005), these studies stop short of exploring how order is constituted in the complex project settings. That is, they do not take the fundamental production of order or the situated constitution of the project/team (as recognizable as such) to be a problem of interest, and thereby these studies overlook the important efforts of actors to construct sense and, in that, the efforts of actually being able to work within complex contexts.

My study attends to this practical challenge of producing order and the work/setting as ordinary, not taking this to be pre-existing but rather as being produced by participants despite and due to experiences of uncertainty and ambiguity. The first analytical chapter demonstrates that the actors in fact produce their everyday interactions as ordinary (i.e. nothing special) and accomplish to produce order situationally in the project setting by making sense of and organizing the work in situ. Thus, this study illustrates that order is

not pre-given but is an accomplishment, even when risks or unexpectedness do not impact, because the setting in itself is experienced as uncertain and complex to manage. In terms of research perspective, exploring how actors construct order, rather than only how they manage disorder, can be seen as an orientation to how the actors produce continuity and stability in a changeable setting; that is, how they constitute their situated practices as part of the overall (continuous) practice of managing/working on the project.

Following this line of thought and in alignment with Hällgren and Lindahl (2012), who urge research to explore projects-as-practice and treat projects as social organizations rather than as technical tools, my study demonstrates that in order to understand projects we need examine situated practices because the 'situatedness of the activities required to execute a project is essential to understanding it' (Hällgren & Lindahl, 2012, p. 337). Similarly, Hällgren et al. (2012), problematizing standardization trends in project literature, note that since 'standards do not reflect situated practice, it is hazardous to use standards as role models upon which to base practice' (Hällgren et al., 2012, p. 478). Also, Jerbrant and Karrbom Gustav (2013, p. 164) conclude that standard 'models that are used in practice are not perceived as enough sense making support for facilitating improvisational "action space" in turbulent and constantly changing environments'; they argue there to be a need for flexible practices as well as an awareness of local contingencies when understanding sensemaking process and relevant spaces of action. Building on these studies, my study contributes by demonstrating how situated practices unfold in-situ and how other resources than standardized models for project management or contracts for cross-organizational collaboration matter for the accomplishment of work and collaboration in practice. My study demonstrates how 'action spaces' are constituted through talk, both for vendors, customers and internal project members, and how the actors by outlining action spaces situationally manage changes, unexpected events, and divisions of roles and responsibilities.

The analytical chapters show how project actors construct order and make sense of both the mundane and the extraordinary as well as their relations by using materials and their membership and professional knowledge as resources, and that these resources are contingent on and made relevant by the local context. Furthermore, resources such as materials are demonstrated as *only* valuable if the actors possess the relevant knowledge about the project as well as the membership competences required to use these tools as relevant in that situation. That is, the tools are in themselves not enough; rather, it is the situated practices of the actors – and how they make sense of what they are doing in situ – that produce these tools as useful in the process of creating order. In that way, my study shows that the 'coherence of situated action is tied in essential ways not to individual predispositions or conventional rules but to local interactions contingent on the actor's particular circumstances (Suchman, 2006, p. 56). Thus, it is evident that it is problematic to use 'standards as role models' for situated practice, that is, even though an 'action can always be projected or reconstructed in terms of prior intentions and typical situations, the prescriptive significance of intentions for

situated action is inherently vague' (Suchman, 2006, p. 51). Rather than abstracting analytical findings to generalized theories and thereby risk reducing the relevance of the findings, as Hällgren et al. (2012) express it, the findings of this study demonstrate the need for research to attend to situated practices and local contingencies in order to better understand project realities.

9.3.2 Managing uncertainties

This study contributes in particular to project literature that investigates unexpected events within projects. In the same way as Hällgren and Söderholm (2010) conclude that it is relevant to explore and 'understand what deviations relate to, especially in an environment with global issues and complex execution, which makes deviations an everyday challenge' (Hällgren & Söderholm, 2010, p. 363), this study shows that project actors continuously deal with unexpectedness that emerges from different sources, but also that it is possible to identify 'response patterns in terms of practice utilised to mitigate deviations' (Hällgren & Söderholm, 2010, p. 365). Similar to Hällgren and Söderholm (2010), this study demonstrates how the actors, depending on the type of unexpected event, make it either relevant to understand and respond to the problem or simply to understand the problem. What the previous research on unexpected events miss, and what my study offers, is exploring these patterns of actions within a routine perspective. My study shows that actors orient towards activities and actions as *routines* – as recognizable, repetitive patterns – and in fact have routinized the management of some types of unexpected issues. More specifically, by examining the micro level of interactions, the second analytical chapter of this dissertation demonstrates that the actors treat the meeting situations (in which they talk about unexpected events) as familiar, routine activities and that the actors orient towards the sequential order and utterances (both turn design and knowledge displayed) as *routinized* and as relevant for the accomplishment of the situational talk, the meeting activity, and organization of actions. The analysis also shows that this routinization is contingent on the nature and source of the unexpected problem and on the action space of the actors. These findings are a contribution, as they show that, in practice, routines can be sensemaking and situated management mechanisms and can absorb uncertainty in situations where unexpected events has occurred.

Moreover, building on work by Musca et al. (2014), who explore how project actors 'discursively co-construct the sense of their [unexpected] situation' (Musca et al., 2014, p. 1157), this study shows how actors cope 'with a threatening, ambiguous and unexpected environment make sense of it' (Musca et al., 2014, p. 1166) and collectively come to understand the problem and what actions are relevant (or non-relevant) in situations of unexpectedness. Further, similar to Havermans et al. (2015), the findings of my study confirm the 'implications of language and narratives' (p. 928) on sensemaking in uncertain project situations. Expanding on the findings of Musca et al. (2014) and Havermans et al. (2015), this study moreover demonstrates the interactional work that actors do to collectively construct the in situ sensemaking and

organization of actions as *relevant* and *sufficient*. That is, the second analytical chapter demonstrates how the project actors construct available knowledge of the unexpected events as sufficient *here and now* for being able to understand their space of actions and possibly organize actions in response. Clearly, much more could be said about the events (in situ and beyond the meeting), but the actors orient towards what is necessary in that local context, constructing the established sense as situationally sufficient, thereby making it observable that sensemaking here is not about fully understanding but rather about understanding enough. In the same way, the assignment of responsibilities and organization of actions are treated as sufficient. Thus, the project actors do not as such orient towards finding solutions to the issues in situ but focus on what is minimally needed for issues to be considered managed here and now, thereby absorbing the uncertainty of the situation and producing a sense of predictability about what will be done, in that the problem-solving as such becomes a concern for another time and space than the meeting. These findings somewhat relate to Hällgren (2007), who found that actors can orient towards response actions as 'good enough' (Hällgren, 2007, p. 777) although they might not follow procedure. In this way, it becomes apparent that locally contingent sensemaking matters greatly for how unexpected problems are responded to. These findings also have practical implications, in that it is made clear that local contingencies matter greatly for the situated management as well as problem-solving of unexpected events.

Previous literature on expected events (Geraldi et al., 2010; Söderholm, 2008) have primarily examined events that are retrospectively seen as having deviated the project from the plan, and what my study contributes with are findings on *how* actors come to understand events as unexpected in real-time talk about the issues, also pointing to how some events are treated as relatively more unexpected than others. Where much previous research, such as Geraldi et al. (2010), take understanding to be a cognitive, individual phenomenon and explore individuals' retrospective sensemaking of unexpected events, this study explores how the project actors *collectively* produce mutual intelligibility, showing that unexpected events come to be mutually understood as such through first order access knowledge, experiences, framing, and categorization work. Furthermore, building on the notion of sensemaking as a collective accomplishment, my study shows that the actors perform actions and contribute with knowledge that enables the collective understanding of the unexpected event, what they are doing in the specific situation, as well as how they should react, thereby showing that decisions about response actions are not the accomplishment of only the project manager. The analysis also points to some of the different resources that the actors can draw on, qua their institutional roles (e.g. entitlements), to influence this sensemaking and organization process. The second analytical chapter of this dissertation concludes that membership knowledge and competences make a difference in terms of what is in fact unexpected *for the members* and thereby calls into question the tendency to categorically consider events that are not planned as unexpected.

The findings of this study have implications for understandings and practices of risk management as well as project planning, as they demonstrate that actors, despite risk management procedures, still experience

uncertainty in the project setting an expect that unidentified, unexpected events will occur and that situated practices matter greatly for how the events are managed. The analyses make it. Also, it becomes evident that actors themselves have great influence on what is taken as unexpected and consequently what is considered 'within' or 'deviating from' the plan, suggesting that plans are in fact prospective and retrospective sensemaking resources (Suchman, 2006). This of course has practical implications, which will require a change of perspective on and understanding of the project manager role, from 'being a "planner" to a "conductor" of processes that are constantly changing' (Hällgren & Söderholm, 2010, p. 365).

To address projects and risk in a more holistic manner, previous research has suggested to practice *uncertainty management* (Ward & Chapman, 2003), rather than risk management, and thereby attempt 'identifying and managing all the many sources of uncertainty which give rise to and shape our perceptions of threats and opportunities' (Ward & Chapman, 2003, p. 98). Considering this notion within the ethnomethodological framework of this study, uncertainty management can be seen as a resource for situational, collective sensemaking, since it allows us to describe possible challenges "without having to describe the actual course that our actions will take" (Suchman, 2006, p. 60) to mitigate these. Furthermore, my findings suggest that in attempting to manage uncertainties it would be relevant to not only consider technical aspects but also the relational dimension, which, as the third analytical chapter demonstrates, creates ambiguity and uncertainty in the setting. Also, my study points to a need to conceptualize uncertainty management in flexible terms, that is, as a practice that is flexibly developing as the project actors become more experienced and competent and thus possibly develop their understandings of what is to be expected, what is unexpected, and how they can deal with uncertain, ambiguous aspects. As some unexpected events are treated as mundane in practice, it may be relevant to consider the management of these an integral aspect and as part of the continuous practice of projects rather than as a disruption to this.

9.3.3 Fluid project teams

In alignment with Henderson et al. (2016), this study finds that global teams' collaboration is positively influenced by 'perceptions of proximity' (Henderson et al., 2016, p. 1726) and that project actors in practice find ways to produce this perception despite geographical distances and different organizational contexts. Similarly, Kasper-Fuehrera and Ashkanasy (2001) suggest that factors such as 'common business understanding' influence trust within interorganizational virtual collaborations, seemingly implicitly suggesting that matters of identification are important for trust in these settings. What studies such as Henderson et al. (2016) and Kasper-Fuehrera and Ashkanasy (2001) do not consider, and where my study contributes, is showing how perceptions of proximity and common understandings are established in practice and how these matters influence constructions of belonging. My study demonstrates how interorganizational, virtual teams through regular meetings share 'microcontexts' (Olson & Olson, 2000) and thereby reduce

epistemic uncertainty and produce perceptions of proximity. The third analytical chapter of this dissertation shows that actors, during their interactions, continuously demonstrate their understandings of 'what they are there for' and their work as interdependent and, simultaneously producing understandings of their collaboration, including responsibilities and entitlements. In this way, the actors in situ reduce some of the uncertainty about what takes place in other locations and manage relational ambiguity by categorizing as mutually working on the project and/or as involved. As mentioned previously, this has practical implications, since the findings suggest that the more interdependent the actors are, the more they communicate about ongoing tasks and challenges, the more shared knowledge and competences they can develop, the better they can situationally collaborate across (formal) organizational boundaries

Moreover, in alignment with Ellis and Ybema (2010), my study confirms that project actors manage and 'make sense of their liminal positions [by] continually shifting their identifications' (Ellis & Ybema, 2010, p. 298). Expanding on existing research, my study shows how actors collectively and fluidly (sometimes simultaneously) produce identifications as project members, as organizational members, and as non-organizational members, thereby constituting collective or different spaces of belonging. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that identifications are directly related to and consequential for the work talk taking place in situ and are valuable resources for actors in handling relational ambiguity. This study also makes it evident that boundaries are situationally constructed and used as resources in shaping identifications, rather than fixed determinants of identifications, as some previous studies consider them to be. Instead, situated work talk and demonstrations of membership knowledge make responsibilities of different project partners relevant and may index organizational boundaries.

The findings of this study contribute to the projects-as-practice literature as well as research on virtual and interorganizational teams by demonstrating how project actors in these complex contexts in practice produce identifications and how this matters for collaborations. The study points to constructions of identification as a mechanism with which global project actors are able to manage the relational ambiguity in intra- and interorganizational projects and concludes that membership knowledge and competences are crucial for producing (shifting) identifications.

9.4 Implications for Studies on Routines

In line with Aggerholm and Asmuß (2016), LeBaron et al. (2016), and Yamauchi and Hiramoto (2016), this study demonstrates how actors 'on a micro-level interrelate their individual courses of action in order to form these repetitive, recognizable patterns of action' (Aggerholm & Asmuß, 2016, p. 141) that constitute routines. Similar to the previous studies, this study finds that mutual intelligibility of the routine (the ostensive) is constructed during the performance of the routine. Where my study expands on the previous theories is by showing that meeting interactions can be routinized on turn-level; that recognizable, repetitive

patterns in *micro-level* actions can be identified and are oriented to as constituting the routine in situ. Previously, Feldman et al. (2016) have pointed to routines 'as effortful accomplishments and routines as emergent accomplishments' (Feldman et al., 2016, p. 507), but this study demonstrates *how* routines as recognizable, repetitive patterns of action are situationally constructed through the interactional efforts of the actors.

Furthermore, in line with Aggerholm and Asmuß (2016) and LeBaron et al. (2016), my study finds that actors construct materials as 'ostensive artefacts' and use these during the interactions as resources to produce mutual understanding and enable progression of the project work. However, my study also shows that these materials are constructed and treated as *transsituational* (i.e. as resources to connect to previous talks about work tasks, project future talks, and organize work in situ). Thus, the ostensive, that is the shared understanding of what we are doing, is in a way materialized and used to organize work *while* simultaneously indexing specific relevant performances of the routine activity *during* the interaction.

This study further expands on previous studies of routines by showing how membership knowledge and competences are central for the accomplishment of routine activity in ways that are meaningful for the members. That is, the knowledge and competence that they have as members of the project allows them to make sense of the routine as such in the local situations and contribute to the performance of the routine in a way that is sensible to the other members while situationally using the routine as a resource to manage the complexity of the project setting. Yamauchi and Hiramoto (2016) concluded that 'ostensive' understandings are not necessary to produce routines, as shared understandings can be produced during the performance. However, my study suggests that in order to perform the routine in a way that is sensible to the others in the local setting, membership knowledge and competences are also necessary, as they enable the actors to not only produce the routine activity but also contribute meaningfully to the talk within. In this way, my study aligns with the notion that ostensive aspects are not cognitive, reconciled understandings, but my study also points to the necessity of (some sort) membership knowledge (as members of society, an organization, a project, etc.) to understand and perform meaningful routines.

Moreover, my study points to how we can address routines as a part of project practice. Previous studies rarely attend to the relation between practice and routines, although the concepts seem very related (section 3.1.2); however, this study demonstrates that routines can be understood as elements in the project actors' situated practices and general practice (i.e. the practice of making unexpected events manageable and the general practice of managing the project as such).

Finally, the findings of this study also contribute to future EMCA studies of routines as they point to aspects that these studies *could* explore in order to identify routines on a micro level, such as: 1) repetitive actions or activities across situations, 2) repetitive correlations between specific actions and certain categories or discursive identities, 3) members' orientations i.e. what activities, settings, materials, actions, etc. the

members treat as familiar, ordinary and/or recurrent, and, finally, 4) routinization on turn-level, that is, repetitions in turn designs, sequential organization, etc. This list is not exhaustive but should rather be taken as a starting point in identifying aspects that could indicate routines.

9.5 Implications for Studies on Identification

In line with Nocker (2009) and Ellis and Ybema (2010), this study confirms that identifications and spaces of belonging are not fixed but are instead constructed and that organizational boundaries matter in identification processes. However, what these studies leave unexplored is showing *how* identifications are produced *in practice*, rather than investigating these as retrospective constructions. My study redefines the concept of 'spaces of belonging' as situated, collective accomplishments of identification, rather than individual discursive constructions (Nocker, 2009), and shows *how* these spaces are produced and oriented towards in situated interactions. My study concludes that identifications are fluid and suggests that the fluidity of 'belonging' is important for actors' ability to manage relational ambiguity in liminal work settings. The study shows that rather than talking about spanning or crossing boundaries, it is more relevant to understand boundaries from a members' perspective, as the analysis demonstrates how boundaries are oriented to and constructed in specific ways *when* and *as relevant* in the ongoing interactions.

Further, this study finds, as Ellis and Ybema conclude, that liminal actors are 'managing simultaneously to "belong" and to be different' (2010, p. 300). However, my study also goes beyond this by showing how different identifications can be simultaneously produced in situ and locally shifted between. By showing that identifications are produced interactionally and even simultaneously, through situated categorization, this study contributes not only with new empirical findings but also by pushing theory on identification to reconsider the conceptualizations hereof.

The findings have implications for how we conceptualize belonging or team membership and addresses the connection between identification and boundaries, both in theory and in practice; rather than take belonging or membership as pre-given states and boundaries as determinants, and talk about these matters in dichotomous terms, we need to explore the members' production of identifications. Thus, we should not limit understandings of membership or belonging to organizational boundaries, since a priori problematizations of boundaries can have direct implications for both retrospective and prospective sensemaking of cross-organizational relationships. Similarly, Lerner and Kitzinger (2007) have noted that collective identities are not to be seen as 'ethnographic facts to explain what is done in interaction, but as situated accomplishments' (p. 550). This re-specification allows us to explore actors and teams' identifications as situated accomplishments. Addressing identification in this manner suggests a radically different approach to the concept of identification than most studies apply, as these often treat identification as intrinsic or as a cognitive phenomenon and thereby on a different level of analysis.

The findings of my study can further be used to reconsider previous studies on liminality. Previous studies such as Borg and Söderlund (2015a, 2015b) suggest that liminal actors need to develop particular liminality competences in order to manage their work and by using these can 'shift between belonging and not belonging to different contexts' (Borg & Söderlund, 2015b, p. 178). What these studies stop short of, and where my study contributes, is in showing how these shifts are in fact accomplished in practice. This study demonstrates how project actors handle relational ambiguity by situationally producing *relevant* identifications, not only as alternating between belonging and not belonging but as more fluidly constructed. The findings imply that we should consider belonging on a continuum, where belonging – identifications as members – is situationally changeable. To explore identification in this way enables us to better understand how actors manage relational ambiguity and produce belongings in changeable, liminal work contexts.

Finally, my study emphasizes the relevance and centrality of membership knowledge and competences in identification processes; to be able to produce relevant memberships and navigate in these different spaces of belonging, the actors need locally relevant membership competences and knowledge. In this way, liminal competences can in practice be taken as a matter of membership competences.

9.6 Methodological Reflections

At this point, I think it is relevant to reflect on the methodological choices of this study, taking strengths and limitations of the methods, approach and findings into consideration.

As mentioned in the beginning of this dissertation, this study has moved between an inductive and abductive approach. The initial explorations of empirical materials were data-driven and sought to be inductive; however, the exploration was of course somewhat influenced by my research interest. In fact, the very empirical corpus suggests the study being guided by a research interest. In a sense, this problematizes the notion of 'unmotivated looking' in applied/institutional CA research, in that, these types of research projects, although exploratory in nature and without prior theoretical notions, are 'motivated' from the beginning due to their focus on (specific) institutional settings. Despite this, I find that by approaching the setting and reviewing the empirical material without theoretical motivations creates the opportunity for discovering diverse phenomena and allowing new perspectives to emerge. In contrast, theoretically motivated looking has been referred to as 'a "heads you win, tails I lose" approach' (Rawls, 2008, p. 709), because when the researched has 'formulated the problem tautologically in advance, conventional researchers cannot lose. On the other hand, they are sure to miss the lived problem of order' (Rawls, 2008, p. 709).The approach of my study has been a motivated, inductive search combined with a later abductive relating of findings to theory, which has led to a focus on 'functional rather than causal explanations, such that behavior is accounted for rather than predicted' (Svennevig, 2001, p. 21).

Further, considerations about the analytical methods also seem relevant to note here. The strengths of conversation analysis (CA) and membership categorization analysis (MCA) are that they enable the analyst to explore meaning-making *as* it unfolds in practice. However, CA's focus on situated interaction can also sometimes be considered a limitation, in that by focusing on the proximate it overlooks the distal and risk reducing the analyses' explanatory breadth (Richards, 2011). This is of course not a problem for linguistic, 'basic' CA studies, as these focus on the proximate, but it can pose a challenge for studies investigating other social phenomena. However, the combination of CA and MCA attends to this problem, as it becomes possible to explore how actors orient towards other features of their social world as well as their talk-in-interaction, making it possible to take the situational context into account in the analyses. However, it does not grant us access to understanding motives or emotions, which make some findings a matter of interpretation (interpretations that of course are supported by previous findings and theories). For instance, the analyses consistently find that the actors, through their actions and utterances, produce categories (e.g. 'project team members' and 'project manager') that seemingly correspond to their institutional roles. The connection between categories and institutional roles can be argued based on empirical findings and by drawing on previous research, for instance studies which have concluded that institutional interactions, such as those in project settings, are typically asymmetrical (Heritage & Clayman, 2010), and that this asymmetry relates to differences in power or epistemic status (Aggerholm & Asmuß, 2016; ten Have, 1993).

The explanatory breadth of my study is somewhat strengthened by the triangulation of data; the observations of the project team members' work days are used to contextualize the micro-analytical findings and, in combination with the interviews, to juxtapose experiences and situated practice. In this study, the interviews and observations provide context and access to actors' sensemaking and experiences. The interviews are not in-depth interviews, since they were intended to be entry points to the project managers' work experiences and for understanding general challenging aspects, not to explore the individuals' perspectives or emotions as such.

In this study, not all empirical materials were used in the final analyses. For instance, it was not possible to use excerpts from all the meetings or draw on examples from all the observations and interviews. It is possible that other findings may have emerged had I chosen, for instance, other excerpts from meetings or (of course) other analytical foci. However, it is also likely that I would have reached similar findings had I chosen other or more excerpts, since most of the excerpts chosen were selected from collections of similar examples. Furthermore, a limitation of the study is that not all observed meetings were recorded, and some were only audio-recorded; for instance, due to the practical constraints of the telephone meetings, only some of these meetings were audio-recorded, and none of these were video-recorded, except for the few instances where the screen, but not the actors, were recorded. If these had been recorded it would have provided many more meetings to explore and use fragments from.

Reflecting on the process, it becomes clear that the data collection process could have been more systematic in what was recorded and how. Also, the analyses of this dissertation could have been organized more consistently in terms of the number and length of excerpts in and across the individual analyses. The same is true for the use of examples from interviews and observations, which also differ somewhat from analysis to analysis. However, rather than seeking consistency across the analyses, they were designed in the way I considered most relevant for the particular analyses in terms of pointing to paradoxes and producing findings.

An aspect that this study could have explored further is the multimodal. Multimodal studies have demonstrated embodied actions, gestures, facial expressions, materials to be important resources in talk-in-interaction (Deppermann, 2013; Mondada, 2016). Similarly, within organizational theory, socio-materiality is increasingly in focus (e.g. Orlikowski, 2007). In my study, multimodal aspects are to some extent included, since shifts in facial expressions, movements, gestures, etc. have been noted where these seem to be oriented to by the others or are very notable. Several of the analytical points are founded on embodied actions, and the functioning of the interaction could possibly have been nuanced even further had I focused more on the multimodal aspect. For instance, where video recordings were available, I could have transcribed the multimodal aspects in more detail (e.g. using the transcription method demonstrated by Mondada, 2016). However, although it would have provided a more nuanced understanding of embodied resources' influence on accomplishing the interaction, I am not sure that the additional focus on the multimodal would have been especially helpful for the purpose of this study or the research questions explored here.

Another aspect relevant to address here is the challenge of performing EMCA studies within organizational research. The central challenge is the radically different approach to accessing phenomena and what is fundamentally taken as interesting phenomena. For instance, in EMCA studies, empirical findings need to be *observable* in interaction, and it is not an aim to understand what occurs 'inside' people (i.e. their cognitive processes). This approach has implications for how concepts are conceptualized and applied in research and often re-specification of concepts is necessary due to differences in epistemological and ontological understandings. Consequently, in this study, concepts such as identification and spaces of belonging have been somewhat reconceptualized as situated, collective accomplishments, rather than individual perceptions. EMCA studies not only approach concepts differently than conventional theory-driven approaches, they also explore different questions than organizational research usually does. Although organizational research today, qua the linguistic and practice turns (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Schatzki et al., 2001), to a greater extent explores social phenomena from practice, discursive, and/or process perspectives, what an EMCA approach offers is insight into the activities that make sensemaking and organization possible in the *first place*: By attending to situated practices first, an EMCA approach can demonstrate the accomplishments of social phenomena/organization rather than a priori '"gloss" over the

actual accomplishment of social organization through labels such as "agency"' (Whittle & Housley, 2017, p. 186). Despite differences, it is possible for EMCA studies to interact with and contribute to existing theory by making these understandings of concepts and phenomena transparent.

Here, I also want to consider the validity and relevance of my study. The data for this study was collected in 2014-2015, and since then the organization of Maersk Line IT has changed tremendously. The core mission of the organization is still the same, although it has expanded somewhat. The significant changes that have occurred within the organization since the data collection emphasize one of the central points in this study: that the project actors work in a complex, changeable setting that produces uncertainty for the actors and that they continuously need to find ways to make their work manageable, produce order, as well as handle unexpected events and collaborate with a broad network of actors across both geographical and organizational boundaries. The results of my study are thus not generalizable, instead they illustrate situated practices, but other organizations may still benefit from and have an interest in the findings, as many organizations, despite varying contexts, face similar challenges. For research, the empirical materials will remain interesting, as these can be explored from a range of research perspectives (e.g. meeting interaction, team dynamics, socio-materiality, etc.).

Finally, a quick note om my role as a researcher and as the project manager of this PhD project. Over the last years I have gained many experiences relating to research management, research practices, and dissemination of research to academia and practice. Throughout the process, I have become familiar with theoretical fields, such as the field of project studies, which previously were unknown to me, and I have also developed my understanding and ability to use different methods and concepts. If I were to begin the PhD project now, at this point in time with all the learning I have accumulated, I may have made other choices, perhaps selecting other analytical foci and perhaps involving project practitioners even further. An aspect, which I have mentioned several times, is the challenge of balancing the in-between position of being an organizational insider and outsider at the same time. Now, as the study is coming to a close, I find myself having moved further towards the role of a researcher, than that of an organizational practitioner, and thus I am now trying to find a position in the researcher-practitioner dialectic.

9.7 Implications for Practice

My study explores the situated practices of managing complexities in global projects, and the analytical findings have implications for project managers and MLIT, the organization that constitutes the empirical setting, as well as for project organizations in general. Here, we will consider some of these implications.

9.7.1 Implications for project managers

First, we will consider the implications of this study for the role of project manager. Although the study examines project practices as collective accomplishments, not focusing on the project managers as such, project managers are important and influential in projects – as the analysis also indicated – and consequently how the role is approached in practice matters for the projects and the teams working on them. The analyses point to several matters that are highly relevant for the project managers (and for organizations hiring them). The most central are: relational skills, project team boundaries, and membership competences.

The exploration of identifications in intra- and interorganizational projects and the findings that identifications matter for the situational, efficient accomplishment of the work imply that project managers need to be able to handle the relational aspects of projects. It is clear that a project team's work tasks are often interdependent, thus rarely executed in a vacuum, and that the project is accomplished through a multiparty collaboration involving organizationally internals, external vendors, and customers. Thus, rather than primarily focusing on the project managers' technical project management skills and their competences in regard to, for example, risk stakeholder management, organizations and project managers need to also focus on communicative and relational skills, because current and future practice requires project managers who can comprehend relational complexities, handle possible ambiguity, and facilitate collaboration processes through virtual media.

Furthermore, the findings point to the importance of stressing the *shared* accomplishment of the project and thinking of boundaries and membership in flexible terms; membership should not be determined by formal organizational structures but rather through the engagement in the projects. Thus, the project managers must facilitate clarity on roles and responsibilities for the actors working on the project while not constructing boundaries that negatively influence the engagement of and collaboration between partners. This is important and valuable for both the work and collaboration in internal virtual teams and for interorganizational teams where the actors share even less organizational and situational context. It seems that this practice can reduce some of the uncertainty and ambiguity of working in liminal, temporary settings.

In line with this, it is important that project managers take seriously their influence in sensemaking processes. The analyses make it evident that projects are complex settings in which the actors experience uncertainty and ambiguity, making sensemaking important throughout projects. As the analyses demonstrated, the project managers have, qua their institutional role, special access to knowledge and thus influence how team members come to understand information or engage in collaborations with customers and partners. The analytical findings illustrate the practical implications of the project managers' situated framing of problems, relationships, and work tasks, and thus suggest the influence of talk and use of language in projects in practice.

Finally, my study calls for a new way to address and understand 'competences', finding that membership competences, and not only professional competences, are vital in practice. The analyses consistently point to

how members demonstrate and use their membership knowledge and competences to accomplish the work talk in situ. Membership competences and knowledge in combination with professional competences thus enable the actors to contribute meaningfully in situated project contexts. It would be relevant for project managers to consider this when newcomers or organizational externals join the project, as these people have not had time to fully learn how to navigate and interact in this setting. In this way, the findings suggest that the ability to navigate in complex project settings and unproblematically talk about and accomplish work is not necessarily or only a question of resilience or particular strong professional skills but instead about the development of members' knowledge and competences.

The above implies that future project managers not only need project management training but may also require other types of training where there is a focus are on these relational competences as well as forums where membership knowledge and competences are in focus. This can be addressed as a concern for communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) – either formalized or emergent – as it can be within these that newcomers can learn from experienced old-timers and develop competences. Although much membership knowledge is learnt by working as a project member, the awareness of the importance of membership competences may result in more collective reflection on practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991), which is important for continuous learning. As noted by Jacobsson et al. (2016), it is 'a turn for practitioners from being trained technicians to becoming reflective practitioners, able to learn and constantly adapt as a part of continuous project processes' (Jacobsson et al., 2016, p. 6).

9.7.2 Implications for MLIT and for project organizations

Next, the findings of my study will be considered with regard to MLIT in light of what the organization looks like today. Since the empirical material was collected, MLIT has evolved and changed noticeably and is today known as Maersk T&L IT (Transport and Logistics IT). In section 5.1, I hinted that the organization has moved away from the otherwise, at the time, new, standardized project model and instead is currently moving towards becoming an 'agile' organization, that is, projects will be organized and managed according to agile methodologies. Within the agile framework, projects are meant to become less 'standardized' and will instead become more varied in terms of team structure, tools, planning practices, etc., since the individual projects will find agile solutions and methods that are relevant for managing the contingencies of that particular context and for achieving the goals. This has implications for collaborative practices as well as central project management activities such as planning: Since agile centres quick adaption and flexibility, the planning of activities will not be long term but instead short term, as the teams work in so-called sprints (Moe, Dingsoyr, & Dyba, 2010), that is, generally 2-week development cycles. Furthermore, project teams are to be organized as (preferably) co-located, long-standing teams that possess central professional competences, making these less reliant on external vendors. Within agile, the notion is that long-standing

teams build tacit knowledge (Boehm, 2002), which could, in this study, be translated to membership knowledge, which proved central for the situated talk and organization of work. The implementation of agile further points to the necessity to ensure that project managers have communicative, relational skills because it becomes central to facilitate collaboration, ensure that the individuals' competences are used, and continuously communicate with and involve stakeholders (Paetsch, Eberlein, & Maurer, 2003). More so than ever, it becomes necessary to understand the project as a joint effort of all stakeholders.

This development is interesting, because it seems that the organization, while this study was underway, has responded to some of the problems or challenges that the actors dealt with in practice, challenges that this study also points to. The organization has seemingly felt a need to be adaptable with regard to the changeable requirements from the business side, qua a fast-developing market, and has seen the value of closely collaborating projects teams (including more continuous collaboration with the business/customer). Interestingly, my study demonstrated that many of these challenges, which are now 'sought resolved', were in fact handled in practice. Although experiencing challenges, as the interviews pointed to, the actors were able to 'make it work' in practice, and due to their competences, experiences, knowledge, and focus on collaborating and delivering the work, they were able to (seemingly unproblematically) handle the uncertainty and ambiguity of their work setting and make it manageable.

Going forward, it is important that the organization supports the teams and project managers, the latter in particular, and to fully benefit from the agile approach, the organization needs to understand that relational aspects and membership knowledge and competences are important for this way of working in global projects.

The findings of my study suggest that it is relevant for project organizations in general to focus less on the standardization of projects and instead focus on the practices of the projects and how project (membership) competences can be developed to enable project actors to manage situational uncertainties, transient relations, and liminal positions. This study finds that, in practice, project actors treat their complex work setting as ordinary, and continuously make an effort to produce order in the setting. Accordingly, when standardized project models do not reduce the challenge of executing projects, it does not imply that practitioners fail to use these models but rather that this approach and understanding of projects fails in capturing the complexity of projects. In practice, project actors already orient to the management of the projects/risks as flexible, as they make "guesstimates" and need a "holistic" approach to understanding the project, as the first analytical chapter demonstrated. Thus, it is relevant for organizations to also adopt a more pragmatic approach to projects – this will help practitioners manage the projects as needed, rather than 'as should' according to organizational procedure, but also will undoubtedly create new challenges for the organizational governance of projects.

Furthermore, it is relevant that organizations consider the relational ambiguity and epistemic uncertainty of virtual and intra- and interorganizational teamwork. This study suggests that in these project settings tight collaboration and frequent interactions connect to the development of membership competences and shared spaces of belonging, which seems important in that they reduce the challenges of working virtually or across organizations. It is the responsibility of the organizations to ensure that the right and the richest technologies are available, to ensure that the team leaders and project managers understand the productive and relational value of close collaboration, and to support collaboration where it is difficult.

9.8 Implications for Future Research

This study provides many opportunities for and indicates several relevant lines of future research. My study demonstrates the relevance of further attending to the practices of projects on a micro level, since this type of inquiry, as this study and previous EMCA-informed organizational studies demonstrate, can provide insight into situated sensemaking processes, routines, leadership, power dynamics, transient relations, etc. Future research on situated project practices may produce findings and recommendations that are of great relevance to practitioners, as these are customized to specific contexts rather than generic advice.

This study points to membership knowledge and competences as central in managing uncertainties and ambiguities. Above, these competences were briefly considered in relation to communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991); however, this could be interesting to explore further in future research. In particular, it would be relevant to explore the connection between situated displays of membership competences and knowledge and communities of practice or the notion of *collectivity-of-practice* (Lindkvist, 2005).

The analyses of this dissertation demonstrate that it is relevant to explore routines in projects, both in terms of identifying these (from a members' perspective) and exploring their function. Expanding on this study it would, for example, be relevant to track interactional patterns across team's regular meetings to further identify the function of routines on a micro level and further explore connections to 'organizational routines'.

Furthermore, this study illustrates that we can learn more about the collaborative practices of intra- and interorganizational project teams by exploring these from an identification perspective. It would be relevant for future studies to explore more systematically and in-depth the identification processes in interorganizational and intra-organizational teams. This would both attend to the general gap in the literature on intra-organizational project teams as well as expand on the limited number of studies of identification processes in cross-organizational and liminal, transient settings. Also, it would be relevant for future studies to attend to the gap in existing literature by examining the relation between identification processes and trust in practice, and in doing so also consider the practical implications for actors in liminal or temporary work settings. Especially examining these matters from a situated practice perspective, rather than a retrospective,

would be novel. Furthermore, it would be relevant in future research to further explore this study's findings on identification and spaces of belonging, taking these as collective accomplishments that are locally contingent, instead of binary states. This research would not only be of relevance for organizational studies, it would also be relevant for sociolinguist studies, which also have strong interests in questions of belonging (Cornips & de Rooij, 2018; Mortensen, 2017). Future, practice-oriented research on identification in liminal, temporary settings seems to be of great importance due to increasing globalization and digitalization, and the subsequent tendency towards more liminal and transient work positions and collaborations (Deloitte, 2015; Lyons, Schweitzer, & Ng, 2015).

Another 'space' that it would be interesting to explore further is 'action spaces' or 'spaces of actions' and how these are constituted. The term is currently used in different areas of research, for instance, in regard to exploring managerial or leadership actions (Crevani, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2010; Griesbach & Grand, 2013) or identities (Carroll & Levy, 2010), and it is also briefly mentioned in Nocker's (2017) recent research on belonging. The term is also used within multimodal CA research, which draws on the term to describe the local, interactional action spaces (Goodwin, 2000; Mondada, 2007b). For future research, it would be interesting to consider these varied perspectives and, for instance, explore how actors during situated interactions construct (e.g. managerial) action spaces and what this in fact means in practice.

An aspect that would also be interesting to explore further in future lines of research is interaction in ICT meetings, particularly from a multimodal perspective as this is an area which has only has begun to be explored. Future research could examine how the digital materiality influences and is used in interaction and specific areas of focus could be interactional phenomena, such as embodied turn-taking and speaker-selection, which the analyses of this study briefly touched upon, or on social phenomena, such as leadership processes in virtual meetings. This would also follow the growing trend within EMCA research and ethnography to examine video-mediated interaction and/or video-recorded interaction (Due & Bierring, 2015; Hassert et al., 2016; Heath & Luff, 1992; LeBaron, 2008; Mondada, 2009).

Finally, an aspect that this study does not focus on but which it would have been interesting to include is leadership (Larsson & Lundholm, 2013; Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007). Project studies have only recently begun to explore leadership as a process of influence (Crevani et al., 2010), rather than as pre-given by institutional roles, and by approaching this from a micro perspective it would be possible to explore how leadership is constituted and unfolded in practice in projects.

Appendices

Appendix 1

SYMBOL	DESCRIPTION
↘	After utterance, suggests falling intonation in the end.
↗	After utterance, suggests rising intonation in the end.
↑	Local rise in intonation.
↓	Local fall in intonation.
project	Indicates emphasis on word or parts of word .
:	Indicates a stretched sound.
(.)	A micro pause - a pause of no significant length. Under ¼ seconds.
(0.7)	A timed pause. The number indicates the length of the pause in seconds.
< >	Arrows show that the pace of the speech has slowed down.
> <	Arrows show that the pace of the speech has quickened.
[ ]	Square brackets show where speech overlaps.
˘ ˘	Utterance said with smiling voice.
pro-	Audible cut-off of word.
.h	Audible inhalation.
h	Audible exhalation.
(h)	Audible exhalation as with laughter.
° °	Low volume.
CAPITALS	High volume.
=	Indicates that there is no pause between them two turns.
( )	Unclear section. Possible word/utterance can be placed between parentheses.
(( ))	A comment made by the transcriber.
{ }	Indicates bodily movements such as gestures and looks. It also indicates virtual movements, such as cursor movements on a screen. These actions are placed above the utterances with which they happen simultaneously.

Appendix 2

LE: men men vi bliver nødt til at have noget prosa på det også altså fra
but but we need to get some prose on that too from the
forretningssiden↘ og: lars jeg bliver nødt til at ↑sige (.) du bliver nødt til
business side↘ and: lars i need to ↑say (.) you need to
LE: {shrugs lightly, looks at JO}
JO: (laughs softly}
LE: at og (0.7) så så må du få noget hjælp fra nogle af pigerne eller ˇnogen
and (0.7) th- then you need to get some help from some of the girls or ˇsomeone
andreˇ til og h og gå hen til de her øh s- stakeholders fordi (0.3) .h ↑vi kan
elseˇ to and h go to these eh s- stakeholders because (0.3) .h ↑we cannot
jo ikke bare [sende øh templaten til dem]
just [send eh the template to them]
LA: [jamen det har jo ikke noget] med det at gøre lee↓ ø:h >hvad skal
[but that has nothing to do] with that Lee↓ e:h >how should
jeg sige< det det som vi snakkede om sidst det er jo at (0.5) hvis vi har de
i put it< what what we talked about last time that is that (0.5) if we have
LE: {gazes at JO}
LA: her rapporter her og det som som jeg også efterlyste lidt i den her template
these reports here and what what i also called for kind of in this template
LE: {frowns and gazes at JO}
JO: {gazes at LE}
LA: det var at øh jamen der er de her rapporter (0.6) øh (0.4) hvad er det for
was that eh but there are these reports here↑ (0.6) ehm (0.4) h what kind of
noget data (.) der er i
data (.) is in here
LE: {turns head to look at screen}
LA: og det >kan man sige< det kan du jo også lave i sådan en table form her og
and that >you can say< you can also do in this kind of table form and
så var det jo at vi øh snakkede om
then it was that we eh talked about
LE: {rolls eyes and looks to ceiling}
LA: øhm at kun- øh simpelthen ku lave en kolonne (0.6)
ehm to cou- eh simplu could do a coloumn (0.6)
LE: .h
.h
LA: om det her
about this here
LE: {looks away from ceiling and gazes at JE}
JO: {holds op finger towards LU and looks at him}

LE: =jamen
=but
LE: {looks at JO, closes mouth and looks down}
LE: h
h
JO: {drops finger}
LA: der er supporteret direkte i ↑expedition↑ eller ej↘
which are supported directly by ↑expedition or not↘
JO: mm
mm
LE: {looks at JO, points to screen, and looks at JO}
JO: {nods}
LA: >så kan man sige< vi kan jo allerede lave en en en preliminary (.) gab
>then you can say< we can already do a preliminary (.) gab
analysis på det↘
analysis on that↘
JO: mm
mm
LA: [ø:h]
[e:h]
JA: [det er da] det er data mapping
[that is] that is data mapping
LE: {smiles and chuckles}
JO: {nods}
JA: steppet det er step to hvor det der det foregår i
the step that is step two where that takes place
JO: {nods}
JO: [mm .h.]
[mm.h]
JA: [kan man] sige[hvor vi har hvor vi har rapporterne ( )]
[you can] say [where we have where we have the reports ( )]
LA: [det er stadig baseret på: øh] det er stadig
[it is still based on: eh] it is still
baseret på de øh: data vi har til rådighed nu ikke↗
based on the eh: data we have available now right↗
JA: [(jo) ( )]
[(yes) ( )]
LE: [.h men men lars] vi bliver jo nødt til at have involveret de her key
[.h but but lars] we need to involve these key
stakeholders til og og: få dem til o:g sige god for vores rapporter↘
stakeholders to and and: get them to vouch for our reports↘
RA: {looks and points at LE and then turns to look at JO}

RA: [( )]

[( )]

JO: [det det første det første]

[the the first the first]

JO: {gestures with hand}

RA: {covers mouth with hands}

JO: det skal få vi skal få signet af

what needs to we need to get signed off on

JO: {taps lightly on the table}

JO: er hey (.)

is hey (.)

JO: {taps the table with a flat hand}

JO: vi har snakket med jer i november måned (.)

we have talked with you in the month of november (.)

JO: {taps the table with a flat hand}

JO: omkring nogle rapporter som [vi bruger] i dag↘ er det de her rapporter

about some reports that [we use] today↘ is it these reports

?: [jah]

[yeah]

JO: {taps the table with a flat hand}

JO: her rapporter som vi har fået ˇaf jerˇ h h er det de her rapporter som

here reports which we have gotten ˇfrom youˇ h h it is these reports which

JO: {taps the table with a flat hand}

JO: i stadigvæk bruger↗ i fremtiden

you still use↗ in the future

JO: {taps on the table with flat hand}

JO: og så skal de svare på de der fire fem spørgsmål som ligger i vores

and then they need to answer these four five questions which lies in our

template↘ det det er step ↑et (.)

template↘ that that is step ↑one (.)

JO: {gestures with hand}

JO: så laver vi data mapping (.) analysis bagefter men nu nu skal vi først lave

then we do data mapping (.) analysis hereafter but now now we first need to

step et færdigt >kan man sige ↑ikke< hvor vi lige får signet af af de der

complete step one >you can say ↑right< where just get signed off by these

users (.) eller dem vi har snakket med øh til at sige ja til det hvad vi har

users (.) or those we have talked with eh to say yes to what we have

logged i vores requirements og requirements det er for mig også en eksempel

logged in our requirements and requirements that is for me also an example

for eksempel (er) deres nuværende rapporter der også er en requirement ↑right

for example (is) their current reports there also a requirement ↑right

(.) øhm så det det skal vi lige vende tilbage øh med øh til dem o:g få

(.) ehm so that that we just need to return with eh with eh to them a:nd get

få signet af og så kan vi kigge på data mapping og (0.4) .h hvor vi ↑så kan

get signed off and then we look at data mapping and (0.4) .h where we ↑then

kan komme i mål det der requirements som vi har (.) om det er expedition

can reach the goals the requirements that we have (.) if it is expedition

eller transport lead eller i b i (.) det skal vi finde ud af bagefter men (.)

or transport lead on in b i (.) that we need to figure out afterwards but (.)

nu nu skal vi først lave step one færdig ↑ikke (.) det er der [hvor vi har

now now we first need to complete step one ↑right (.) and that is [where we

LA: [(det lyder

[(sounds

JO: brug] for din hjælp lars til at til lige gå ud til de

need] your help lars to to just go out to

LA: godt)]

good)]

JO: der stakeholders som er som vi har identified nu og gå tilbage (.)med de

the stakeholders which are which we have identified now and go back (.) with

der reports og sige okay det er dem vi har fået af dig kan du lige

these reports and say okay it is these we have received from you can you just

fill ud fylde den her template med de der fire spørgsmål og så er det en

fill in fill in this template with these four questions and then that is a

done deal↘

done deal↘

(1.8)

LA: ah det skal jeg gerne gøre øh (.)

ah i will be happy to do that ehm (.)

Appendix 3

The following text is from the notes made during the observations of Greg. The text illustrates *one* day of observations and in order to focus strictly on what occurred, I have not here include my reflections during the observations. Notes on about the office environment were made on the prior day of observations. The notes have been translated from Danish.

Thursday

09.23 AM
Greg arrives and sits by his PC at his desk.

09.37 AM
He leaves and comes back and calls into a meeting (phone meeting) about an upcoming release. There are at least four participants. One participant does most of the talking and provides updates while Greg comments, asks questions and explains.
They share a list of requirements through Lync.
Other participants ask questions and have a dialogue. Greg instructs the others in how to proceed and provides positive assessments of their responses. Greg suggest that they repeat the meeting next week.

09.58 AM
The meeting ends.

10.00 AM
Greg sits for a moment at his PC and then walks to a meeting room where the next meeting is scheduled to take place.

10.05 AM
Face-to-face meeting with representatives from an internal department (GT) and external consultants (HBH):
The participants arrive and exchange greetings and small talk.
Dina from the GT department explains and informs the rest of the status. Greg explains challenges with instable HBH resources and that they need to reassess the contract. They discuss how to proceed and what steps to take.
They clearly spend much energy and time on contracts with vendors that deliver various kinds of services.

10.23 AM
Another participant joins the meeting but leaves again shortly after to take a call. Greg checks his e-mails.
They discuss roles and reported problems. They do not seem to have full overview of dependencies or responsibilities between the project and the GT- department. There appears to be a 'black box' of knowledge. Greg exhibits overview of the project processes.

10.57 AM
Dina opens new subject: Test environment.

Greg gets ready to leave. Dina continues to talk and expresses frustration over processes in the company and office politics.

11.05 AM
Meeting ends.
Greg skips next meeting and says: “The PMs are gonna attend it”. The PMs (project managers) report to him.

11.11 AM
Greg sits by PC.

11.17 AM
Greg walks over and talks with Daniel (team member) and then walks back to desk.

11.24 AM
Daniel walks over to Greg, talks, soon walks back to own desk.

11.36 AM
John (team member), sitting at his desk, talks with Greg.
They all sit relatively close to each other in the open office.

11.51 AM
Daniel talks with Greg again and they joke and laugh.
Soon all leave for lunch.

12.40 PM
Back from lunch.
During lunch, Greg informed me that he now will consolidate slides from some different people to prepare for a meeting this afternoon with the business.
Greg sits by his PC.

12.45 PM
A participant from the face-to-face meeting earlier comes by and talks briefly with Greg and leaves again.
Greg works on PC.

01.30 PM
Daniel walks over to Greg. They look at the screen together and talk. Daniel walks back to own desk.

01.48 PM
Daniel walks over to Greg again. Talks.

02.00 PM
Meeting with business (phone call with shared screen): This is a weekly meeting, named “catch up”.
Seven participants (from project team, GT, business, and the vendor).
Greg greets the first two on the line and they small-talk about an email and the weather.
The last people connect to the call and Greg shares his screen via Lync.

02.06 PM
Greg explains about a breakdown last week. He provides his assessment and explains about the teams' actions to resolve the down time.
Helene from the business stresses the need for the regular occurrence of breakdowns to stop – that they need to find a permanent solution. Greg agrees and assures her that they are working on it.
Helene accepts this, but criticizes the communication from the project team – that they don't inform the business side of the project in appropriate time, which means they instead heard about issues from the end-users in the business. She underlines she wants better communication.
Mary from the GT department tries to explain, but is clearly unsure of what to say. She promises to look at the process.
Louisa (from the business) underlines they need "immediate communication" when the system is down.
Mary expresses understanding and says it is "something to look into". Greg then says: "Mary, can we take this one offline?"
Helene says they already expressed this need a month ago and that this is not good enough. They agree to discuss further in a follow up meeting.

02.18 PM
Greg says: "Moving on quickly" and he then reviews the next point on the agenda: Testing.
Helene is again critical.
Greg informs about a new release the upcoming Sunday and about the new functionalities it will give the business end-users.
Greg and Samucha (vendor) coordinate testing the following week.

02.29 PM
They discuss incidents and moves on to the last topic.
Greg shows a time plan and a deployment matrix. He explains about both items and shares new info.

02.35 PM
Greg asks if anyone has any questions, asks Lars directly if he has any questions. They discuss a subject. Then he asks Samucha if she has anything, she says no and then he sums up Helene's point about communication and the many small break downs in the system. Helene is again critical, and Greg point out that things have improved and that they are currently releasing very complex system components at a high frequency but that it will soon be reduced.

02.39 PM
Greg asks Louisa and Sachin if they have anything. They don't. Greg promises to send information 'as he normally does'.

02.40 PM
Meeting ends.
Greg gets up right away and walks down to Mary. They discuss how to communicate better and more promptly to the business.

02.50 PM
Greg returns to his own desk. Works on different documents and writes emails on his PC.

05.03 PM
Greg connects to a new meeting (phone call).
Greg is not the meeting chair. Not sure how much he is actually listening as he is also writing on his PC.
The chair reviews a document that she has sent the participants before the meeting. The talk is very technical.
Greg appears to listen, but does not contribute. The talk continues to be quite technical.

05.30 PM
Meeting ends.
Greg works on PC.

Day ends.

(Observation: Greg)

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